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of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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Virtual Sittings

*Sittings 17 through 23 of the 2020/2021 Session
(pages 1353–1876 and INDEX)*

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

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING****7 MAY 2021****10:02 AM***Sitting Number 17 of the 2020/21 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. The session is about to start. Welcome back after a break from these Chambers.

Ms. Beale is going to do the prayer for us this morning.

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]***CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES***[Minutes of 22 and 26 March 2021]*

The Speaker: Thank you.

Good morning, Members. Our session has now begun.

The Minutes from March the 22nd and March the 26th have both been circulated. Are there any amendments, adjustments or corrections required?

There are none.

*[Minutes of 22 and 26 March 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: There are none.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: I believe there is one this morning, in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your communication? Mr. Premier?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Does anyone else have it? Is anyone doing it on his behalf?

[Pause]

The Speaker: We are going to move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are no petitions.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: We have a few Statements this morning, roughly about eight Statements. The first this morning is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, would you like to do your Statement?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning and good morning to everyone today.

The Speaker: Good morning to you.

**UPDATE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
STATISTICS AS AN INDICATOR OF THE STATE
OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to inform this Honourable House of the [Department of Planning Statistics](#).

The applications submitted to the department continue to serve as an indicator of the state of the construction industry and the impact of this important industry to the economy of Bermuda during these trying times. In the first quarter of this calendar year, the statistics compiled by the department highlight growth in all areas, interest in new development, construction of new development and also increased sales in the real estate sector. The department's services directly support this growth.

Mr. Speaker, the planning process typically involves both a planning application and a building

permit. Minor works, also known as “permitted development” under the Development and Planning (General Development) Order 1999, require only a building permit known as a permitted development permit, more commonly known as a PDP.

Mr. Speaker, commencing with the planning application process, the statistics paint a very encouraging picture of the development interest in Bermuda. Turning back to 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 140 planning applications were submitted to the department between the timeframe of January 1 and April 30. In turn, a total of 110 applications were approved. During the same period in 2020 when the virus first appeared on our shores, submissions took a slight dip with 103 submissions being made, with 67 being approved.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, indeed, to share that the numbers this year demonstrate that despite the pandemic investment and interest in development is taking off. Specifically, 213 planning applications were submitted in the first four months of this new calendar year. Within that same period the Planning team have approved 135 applications. Both figures are essentially doubled in comparison to what we observed in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to provide information regarding these types of developments that are being applied for. Whilst the majority of applications are seeking a series of renovations and additions to existing dwellings of varying size, there have been some new commercial developments also. The department has received a number of applications for new houses for both the recently approved Riddell’s Bay residential lots and also those lots approved under the Tucker’s Point Special Development Order. Notable larger projects involve those associated with the Azura Hotel and multi-unit developments across the Island.

Mr. Speaker, whilst planning application submissions highlight initial interest in development, it is the building permit application process that demonstrates intent and action to proceed with construction. In the first four months of this year, both residential and commercial building permits significantly outpaced last year, with 114 and 63 received, respectively. This is a large increase over 2020, which saw 60 residential building permits and 46 commercial [permits] received.

Mr. Speaker, the PDP submissions are where a significant increase in the numbers can be seen. As mentioned previously, these are small-scale projects, predominantly minor renovations and additions, and residential solar panel installations. This work is mainly undertaken by the many small and medium-sized construction businesses, most of which have been adversely affected by the pandemic. In the same period in 2020 there were 81 residential PDPs and 21 commercial PDPs issued. In this calendar year the department has processed 170 residential PDPs and

24 commercial. Of the residential permits, 66 are for solar PV installations. These are impressive figures and speak to optimism and confidence in our economy, particularly the building trades sector. Furthermore, these types of works are generally carried out by local labour, resulting in reasonable employment levels for local contractors.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may believe that [the figures for] these years are similar and do not exceed pre-COVID years, specifically 2019. On the contrary, this year’s figures still beat those of 2019 when the current pandemic state of affairs was still inconceivable. In 2019 there were 106 residential building permits submitted in this same calendar period and 57 commercial, with 125 PDPs issued. Note that in 2019, PDPs were not categorised as residential or commercial.

Mr. Speaker, you might observe that permits do not equate to actual [construction] activity, but activity is demonstrated by the number of building and electrical inspections that are taking place. In 2020, there were 1,251 inspections carried out in the first four months. In 2021 to date, the department has carried out 1,814, an increase of 45 per cent. It is an encouraging signifier of the continued activity within the construction industry. Thanks to the department’s recently implemented records management and database, Energov, granular information is more readily available.

Mr. Speaker, to the naysayers who might think that this activity only speaks of ongoing projects, we can confidently attest that ongoing works present only part of the picture. Of those 1,814 inspections carried out this year, 266 of them were for commencement of works, which are performed at the start of a project, as compared with only 154 out of the 1,251 in the previous year. This is excellent news and signifies a vibrant construction industry moving ahead with confidence and optimism.

Mr. Speaker, further testament to that optimism is in the number of planning searches, which are initiated when a property is being purchased. In 2019 and in 2020 there were 240 and 261, respectively, for the entire year. To date for this year there have been 102, which is approximately 40 per cent of the previous year’s average for the whole year, achieved at only the first quarter of the year. This demonstrates investor confidence in an economy that is moving in a positive direction.

Mr. Speaker, in light of those positive statistics, I take this moment to acknowledge and commend the Department of Planning, a critical department within my Ministry, for all of its continuing hard work in response to this increase in applications, development and property purchases.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

ISSUANCE OF NEW GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 2AA(3) of the Government Loans Act of 1978, I rise to inform this Honourable House of the issuance of three *[sic]* [new Government guarantees](#).

Mr. Speaker, when determining whether the Government should consider providing a guarantee, various factors are taken into consideration before making a final decision. These factors include whether the guarantee is part of the Government's plan to diversify the economy, whether the project being guaranteed is of national importance and is therefore beneficial for the country, or whether an implicit guarantee needs to be replaced by an explicit guarantee in order to save on borrowing costs.

Mr. Speaker, with the aforementioned criteria in mind, the Government has guaranteed a \$30 million loan on behalf of the Bermuda Land Development Corporation (BLDC) for the installation of a sewer main, a drinking water main, a reclaimed water main and a spare main in St. George's. Mr. Speaker, in relation to the \$30 million BLDC guarantee, the guarantee will facilitate the revitalisation of essential water and wastewater infrastructure within the East End, which is the first phase of the Integrated Water and Waste Master Plan.

Mr. Speaker, this development will be crucial to the Town of St. George's [the Town], as well as the new St. Regis Hotel. It will connect water storage infrastructure at BLDC with the town and introduce new water production and sewage treatment facilities. The end result will be a solution to the failing sewage infrastructure within the Town, increased water production to service the Town, as well as residents of St. George's Parish and St. David's. And it will introduce a new resource of non-potable water available for flushing, irrigation and service to the new hotel.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is the end result of the East End water master plan study undertaken some years ago. It will in the future be replicated on a much larger scale for the entire Island during future phases of the Integrated Waste and Water Master Plan.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would note that projects such as this are consistent with Government's

intention to make a considered and deliberate approach in relation to the issuing of guarantees. This initiative is focused on revitalisation of central infrastructure, which will not only provide future services to residents, but also provide opportunities for employment as contractors execute the works. Whenever possible, we will continue to take proactive steps to help to spur job growth and facilitate initiatives with positive short- and long-term impact on the Bermudian people and economy.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier I wanted to talk about three guarantees; there is actually only one for this reporting. I will report the two others once they have been consigned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Thank you for that Statement. I understand the next Statement is yours as well. Would you like to present that at this time?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

STANDARD & POOR'S RATINGS REVIEW

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to inform this Honourable House on the positive results of the recent sovereign ratings review by [Standard & Poor's](#) (otherwise known as S&P). Mr. Speaker, on Monday, March 29, 2021, S&P conducted its annual ratings review of the country of Bermuda. The purpose of the review was to assess the country's creditworthiness and to determine the level of risk associated with lending to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, when evaluating the creditworthiness of a country, a credit rating agency is assessing a country's ability and willingness to service its financial obligations to commercial creditors on time and in full. Both quantitative and qualitative considerations form the basis for these forward-looking assessments. Areas evaluated to assign an appropriate credit rating include those related to the political environment, its economic status, the effectiveness of its policymaking, the sustainability of its deficits and its debt burden.

Mr. Speaker, to make its determination for Bermuda, S&P met with the Minister of Finance and his team, the Department of Statistics, as well as a number of other persons and entities in the public and private sectors. Outside of government agencies, those interviewed included the Governor, the Leader of the Opposition, and representatives from the Bermuda Monetary Authority, the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers, the Bermuda Tourism Authority and the Bermuda Business Development Agency. Mr. Speaker, after their evaluation of the information received through their discussions and re-

search, S&P has affirmed Bermuda's A+ long-term sovereign credit and senior unsecured debt ratings, as well as its A-1 short-term rating and its AA+ transfer and convertibility assessment with the outlook assessed as "Stable."

Mr. Speaker, in explaining the rationale for the affirmation, S&P stated that the ratings reflect Bermuda's strong institutional framework for governance, prosperous economy, favourable external profile, ample fiscal flexibility, moderate net general government debt burden and limited monetary flexibility. The report went on to state, "We view Bermuda's policymaking as largely effective, predictable, and proactive, and its political institutions as stable. We believe the territory [can and] is willing to implement reforms to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances."

Mr. Speaker, given all of the challenges this Island has faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this Government is very pleased to have been given a stamp of approval by S&P for the way we have handled our affairs during these trying times. Mr. Speaker, in S&P's report they acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic derailed our fiscal year 2020/21 performance, but also acknowledged that this was the case for many other countries. Moreover, S&P believe Bermuda's economic recovery will begin in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, while the report was very positive and endorsed all of the hard work the Government has done to date, it is also important to note that we must continue to be vigilant and maintain our prudent approach to management of the country's finances. Factors such as an unexpected weakness in our insurance/reinsurance sector, a resurgence in the coronavirus that substantially shuts the economy, a failure to improve government finances which leads to sustained deficits, or a fall in the pension assets to less than 25 per cent of gross domestic product could cause S&P to lower our rating in the next two years. Mr. Speaker, to ensure Bermuda maintains its credit rating, Government must therefore maintain and enhance its fiscal discipline and continue with its commitment to implement its Economic Recovery Plan (ERP).

Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Health, National Security and COVID-19 frontline teams for the work that they have done in combatting this virus, along with those persons in the public (the majority of our residents) who have been observing the restrictions which have had to be imposed for the safety of all. This has helped the Government to limit the damage done to the economy and ensure that our economy begins to recover in the near term. I would also like to thank all of the people who met with S&P and helped to ensure their confidence in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to highlight that this Government pledges to continue to implement reforms to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances and economic growth over the long

term and to build a more inclusive and stronger Bermuda. The successful implementation of these and other key measures will ensure that Bermuda prospers and that credit rating agencies continue to endorse the creditworthiness of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement on the Order Paper this morning is in the name of the Attorney General.

Honourable Member, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

GOVERNMENT REFORM UPDATE MEETING THE WELLNESS OBJECTIVE

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Good morning again.

I am pleased this morning to provide this Honourable House with an update on efforts to meet the [Government Reform Initiative, Wellness Objective](#). Mr. Speaker, as a reminder, in November of last year, I informed this Honourable House that the responsibility for government reform now falls under the remit of the Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Reform. At that time, I provided an update on much of the foundational work currently in progress and specifically conveyed that the Government has prioritised development of its people, who are our public officers, and platform, which is our information technology, while simultaneously taking the necessary steps to undertake a value assessment of all public services with a view to using the data to make sound data-driven decisions.

Mr. Speaker, while I committed to return to this Honourable House with a further update following the outcome of the public service value assessment to share the impact that its results will likely have on the delivery of public services in the future, we are not at the stage to share this work as of yet. That said, given the current and ongoing coronavirus pandemic conditions, however, I thought it important today to highlight the employee Wellness Objective as set out in the government reform initiative and to provide an update on steps taken by the Government as a leading employer in Bermuda to ensure the health and well-being of its officers.

Mr. Speaker, an objective of the people component of government reform was to have 50 per cent of public officers participate in a Government Wellness programme. The 50 per cent participation rate was to be achieved by 2020. While we had made quite an excellent start with the implementation of the Global Challenge programme that saw in excess of

650 public officers participate, COVID-19 proved somewhat of a disrupter to our progress. Mr. Speaker, the Wellness Committee established under the sponsorship of the Head of the Public Service has re-focused their activities and continues to work towards achieving our government reform wellness objectives.

Mr. Speaker, the coronavirus pandemic has affected our entire community in many ways. As an employer, the health crisis ushered in significant workplace challenges and changes. While the Government was working tirelessly to adapt to the public health crisis and the massive economic and social challenges defined by the pandemic, we were also required to focus on our employees and the health of public officers to enable continuity of services.

Mr. Speaker, it was imperative that the corporate wellness programme continued. Therefore, as an employer, the Government was forced to adapt to approaching employee wellness differently. The Government therefore introduced a MoveSpring Steps Challenge for public officers in fall 2020. The programme ran for 100 days and concluded in January 2021. Collectively, 485 public officers logged 210,781,333 steps. Overall, for both challenges—that is, the Global Challenge and MoveSpring challenge—a combined total of 1,135 public officers committed to improving their health and performance through their active participation in the programme. As a result they have increased awareness of their nutrition, focus, sleep, balance and physical activity.

Mr. Speaker, the MoveSpring Steps Challenge not only caused officers to continue to engage in physical activity to remain healthy, but it introduced government employees to health and well-being elements via a deliberate yet staggered manageable process. Similar to the Global Challenge launch initiative, which required group activity, the MoveSpring challenge required public officers to self-manage their fitness approach by setting individual goals and joining specific mini-challenges created by our Wellness Committee. These experiences were brought to life through the use of websites and smartphone apps. They were immersive health and well-being experiences that informed and engaged employees.

Mr. Speaker, participants were able to track their steps and activities such as walking, swimming, cycling, boxing, rowing, Pilates, yoga and more while simultaneously adhering to all public health regulatory requirements.

Mr. Speaker, officers participating in the programme were able to view their health progress on the health dashboard, which provided a holistic snapshot and equipped them with important information that they needed to achieve their goals. Further, participants were able to leverage the health dashboard to monitor their well-being in real time, identify areas of improvement in their overall health and discover new ways to succeed notwithstanding the coronavirus pandemic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, public officers have worked exceedingly hard through multiple lockdowns, remote working and essential service delivery. Research suggests that the current coronavirus pandemic requires employers to modify their corporate wellness offerings with more attention to three key areas. These include more virtual wellness offerings, greater focus on mental health and greater focus on population health management.

Mr. Speaker, this Government remains steadfast in its commitment to employee wellness and achieving our wellness objectives in the best interest of all public officers. In these circumstances the focus for the Employee Wellness Programme 2021 is mental health and well-being under the theme of “Mental Health Matters.”

Mr. Speaker, this theme is based on research in which the World Health Organization (or WHO) estimated that globally 264 million people suffer from depression, one of the leading causes of disability, with many of those people also suffering from symptoms of anxiety. A recent WHO-led study estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy US\$1 trillion each year in lost productivity. Improving the mental health of public officers—making them mentally resilient to stress from the COVID-19 pandemic—can improve thinking, decision-making, workflow and relationships at work. All of this translates to increased productivity.

Mr. Speaker, employee wellness is a leading strategy in reforming the workplace through increased productivity—hence the reason it is one of many initiatives that this Government is actively pursuing. In particular, over the next three months the Wellness Committee will implement several activities including webinars, mental health challenges, and mental health and wellness training for managers.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to recognise our Wellness Committee for their resourcefulness and continued efforts in managing the employee wellness initiative throughout this challenging coronavirus pandemic period, and to recognise Team TCD for their success in logging the most steps during the recently concluded MoveSpring challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, Attorney General.

The next Statement on the Order Paper this morning is from the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

FOSTER CARE MONTH

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to inform this Honourable House that the month of May is celebrated as [Foster Care Month](#). Under normal circumstances, the Department of Child & Family Services would be gearing up to hold a special recognition celebration event for Bermuda's foster parents. However, owing to the restrictions in place to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 we were unable to hold the Annual Appreciation Tea for Foster Parents in 2020 and now again in 2021. Despite this, we must take some time out to honour Bermuda's foster parents. They are to be commended for the role that they play in providing stability to our foster children. Foster parents open their hearts and their homes by taking in children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot remain with their families. The foster parents provide nurturing, guidance and love for foster children. Foster parents, with the support of the Department of Child & Family Services, provide a safe haven for the children.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has close to 70 foster families on Island. These persons along with their extended family members are the unsung heroes in our community. When a child enters a home as a foster child, they become intricately linked to the extended family of the foster parents. The Department of Child & Family Services, under the authority of the Children Act of 1998, is responsible for all child protection matters pertaining to young people ranging from newborn up until the age of 18. Our foster families are caring for these youth in need, and some of them are caring for more than one foster child at a time.

Mr. Speaker, we have 11 foster families who are caring for special needs foster children. These are classified as therapeutic foster children who have a combination of intense emotional, behavioural and cognitive challenges. Within this number, some of these special needs children also have physiological challenges that need the direct attention of medical specialists, with overseas medical interventions being necessary to address the unique conditions. Our local paediatricians often consult with and refer to Boston Children's Hospital for this group of children. This is a growing area of concern for the department, as there is a need to recruit new foster parents who have knowledge and experience in the area of working with or caring for the special needs population. The department runs a campaign to recruit more therapeutic foster parents. To date, five persons have agreed to be interviewed, and they will be going through the required application process.

Mr. Speaker, the recognition and highlighting of Foster Care Month is not complete without expressing a huge thank-you to the Foster Parents Association, Charity No. 620. The Foster Parents Association works diligently with the community to raise funds and obtain items for foster children. The Foster Parents

Association comprises active foster parents, and they too should be commended for the ongoing support given to Bermuda's foster children.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social Development & Seniors takes this time on behalf of all of the children in foster care to thank those individuals who have opened their homes and have given selflessly of themselves to make a difference in the lives of children. I encourage more people within our community to become foster parents. In doing so, Mr. Speaker, such persons will provide caring, safe, nurturing homes for children when their families are unable to care for them. Anyone interested in being a foster parent should contact Ms. Selena Simons on 296-7575.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members of this Honourable House, along with all persons within the community, to salute Bermuda's foster parents during the entire month of May, as well as the staff of the Department of Child & Family Services for managing this very important programme. Our children, vulnerable for many reasons, need us. As a community we can pledge to enrich the lives of foster children and advocate for the needs of foster children.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I wish to send a message to all of our foster children. For some, life in foster care can be extremely challenging. To sometimes feel displaced, alone, unwanted, disconnected, confused and unloved are real feelings to be recognised and acknowledged. Always know that you are not alone and you are important no matter what the circumstance. If you are given a firm place to stand, stand tall and concentrate on moving the heaven and earth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

STIMULUS PROGRAMME THIRD UPDATE

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide a further update on the Short Term [Stimulus Programme](#) that was launched on December the 17th, 2020, to a maximum value of BD\$13,385,000 where small to medium-sized contractors were invited to participate.

Mr. Speaker, the programme was launched as there is an urgent need to provide stimulus to the local economy in order to retain and boost employment numbers in the wake of the economic downturn sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Ministry of Public Works compiled a list of shovel-

ready projects that are executable almost immediately. These projects are mostly infrastructure improvements and will not add further burden to government operational expenses. The project's selection principles are to maximise the employment of the private sector while providing much-needed refreshing of neglected infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure allocation of the stimulus funding across the participating businesses, the Ministry will maintain a register of approved contractors and awarded contracts to ensure that no one company monopolises the project list. Once a company obtains a project, they will be rotated to the bottom of the list to allow other companies an opportunity for work. The guiding principle is to prioritise all companies that provide the most employment benefit per dollar spent while spreading the work among Bermudian owned and operated businesses.

Many of these small to medium-sized businesses have never worked for government before, and oftentimes the challenge is cash flow. In light of this we have arranged with the Accountant General's Department to accelerate the payment schedule to every two weeks, noting that those who owe government money must engage in a payment plan in order to secure the work. Things are moving in the right direction, starting off a bit slowly due to the lead times for materials and companies having to sort out their outstanding balances prior to award of a contract.

Mr. Speaker, to date, 93 out of the 98 companies have been approved and are prequalified to work with the government. All 98 have been evaluated. The five companies that did not meet the criteria have not responded to requests to submit missing mandatory documents, and that option has now ended. Nine contracts have been awarded to date, as follows:

- The MDL renovation project has been awarded to Greymane Contracting Ltd.
- The Flatts Bridge handrail project has been awarded to Strike Force General Trucking, Excavating and Maintenance Ltd. Site visit conducted this week. Awaiting lumber order which is delayed due to COVID-19. Aiming for start date of May 24.
- Artemis building B interior work. Project has been awarded to Integro Interiors Ltd. Long lead time for some materials, but beginning to mobilise on the site.
- Darrell's Wharf still awaiting planning permissions. Contract awarded to Kaissa Ltd. Long-lead items. Start on site in four weeks, May 23.
- Elbow Beach access. Contract awarded to Smith Hauling & Excavating. Start date May 17.
- Artemis Building A, loading dock repairs. Awarded to Next Level Development. Pre-award meeting to be held. Start date to be confirmed.

- [Artemis Building B—Wash-down Area—Awarded to Heart and Soul Construction. Pre-award meeting to be held. Start date to be confirmed.]
- New Plant Inspection Building at Botanical Gardens. Awarded to Daniels Construction. Pre-award meeting to be held. Start date to be confirmed.
- Veranda repairs at Camden. Awarded to Limestone Holdings Ltd. Pre-award meeting to be held. Start date to be confirmed.

There are several projects out for evaluation, as follows: highways fencing, wastewater section landscaping (three projects), dock maintenance work across the Island, cleaning Pembroke Canal and roadside vegetation removal.

Mr. Speaker, companies who owe government funds will be garnished or a payment plan will be put in place before they are awarded contracts. Workforce Development has reached out to the Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] in order to facilitate the hiring of the temporary workers through the H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck framework. This looks like a good fit and will see Workforce Development transferring funds to BHC to run the programme on their behalf. BHC will then create MOUs [memorandums of understanding] with the various participating contractors to on board the workers.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great opportunity for cross-ministry collaboration between the Ministries of Labour and Public Works, along with the Bermuda Housing Corporation. The entire team at the Ministry have been working extremely hard to get this initiative up and running, ably led by consultant Project Manager, Mr. Robert Richardson, who has been assigned to coordinate the work of all of those involved. I would like to publicly thank them all for their efforts.

We are very pleased with the response to the stimulus programme thus far from both contractors and likely employees, all of whom want to get to work and help the economy improve. This project is bearing fruit, and one can expect to shortly see a flurry of stimulus activity occurring around the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time? Minister?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. I was just waiting for my video to come up. I am in your hands, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We can hear you and see you. Go right ahead.

SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: All right. All right.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise before you and my honourable colleagues to share the plans that have been put in place to reopen our schools safely for in-person learning on Monday, May 10th.

Mr. Speaker, I begin by first thanking our school principals and preschool administrators, our teachers and other school staff, Department of Education officers, and parents and guardians for working together during the past four weeks to provide online teaching, and provide guidance and support services to our students. I acknowledge that there are additional demands placed on staff and parents during remote learning, and in recognition of this I highlight and celebrate their resilience and perseverance with navigating all of the different virtual platforms that were used for remote learning with our students.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue I pause here to give a big shout-out to our principals, teachers and staff as Teacher Appreciation Week 2021 comes to a close. Our principals and teaching staff do a great job throughout the school year, and I could not let this week end without publicly acknowledging all of them. I am sure our parents join with me in extending our appreciation and gratitude to them.

Mr. Speaker, as our [students and staff prepare to return to in-person learning](#) on Monday, the Department of Health has emphasised the need for all students and all staff to adhere strictly to the safety and health protocols for schools. These protocols provide schools with a daily routine structure for applying the Government's comprehensive prevention and control measures aimed at protecting staff and students, and mitigating and reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the approach used in our schools' safety and health protocols is supported by current research from the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. In an April 30, 2021, article published by this centre, recent research findings revealed that when strict protocols were implemented for preventing, diagnosing, and managing school-associated cases, in-person learning in public schools was not associated with increased prevalence and incidence overall compared with the general community, and secondary transmission was infrequent. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, as schools prepare to reopen on Monday, it is critically important for staff and students to adhere to all safety and health protocols 100 per cent of the time. This must be the standard, because following the protocols is a contributing factor to ensuring the sustained safety of staff and students.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health has emphasised the significance of staff and students wearing masks and wearing them correctly—that is, covering the nose and mouth, and fitting the mask snugly across the nose, cheeks and chin, to

protect others. Our principals will ensure that this protocol is followed continuously as we reopen our school buildings. All staff, no matter what school level, must wear their masks all day. Students at the middle and senior schools must also wear their masks all day, while students at the preschool and primary levels will wear their masks only during the times outlined in the safety and health protocols.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education has provided school staff with reusable cloth masks, and there are measures in place for the provision of disposable masks for staff if needed. Parents and guardians are responsible for providing masks for their children, and we need parents to ensure that children have an extra mask or two in their school bags in the event that their mask gets soiled or damaged. As stated, mask-wearing plays a key role in protecting others from COVID-19 viruses.

Mr. Speaker, it is pleasing to know that there are businesses that recognise the importance of working together to keep our schools safe. This week the General Manager of Bermuda Cleaning Ltd, Mr. Ryan Faries, made a donation of over 1,000 cloth masks for distribution in our public schools. The masks are an assortment of having the classic Bermuda crest, the Bermuda Islands, and the Somerset and St. George's Cup Match themed designs. These masks will be distributed to students with an identified need.

Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Faries reached out to me he stated, that with the upcoming potential reopening of the schools, they thought this could be a great time to provide a donation of masks to the Department of Education to help with the safe return to school for kids and teachers.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. Faries and the staff at Bermuda Cleaning Ltd for their generous donation and for their efforts in support of safe schools. I also invite other businesses to reach out to school principals or the Department of Education if they would like to donate masks for our students.

Mr. Speaker, let me share another safety measure that will be implemented in schools. Just this week, Monday, I met with the Education Emergency Measures Committee [EEMC] to discuss the introduction of a saliva test screening strategy for public and private schools. The EEMC is in support of this screening strategy, which will help health officials identify persons in our schools who may be COVID-19 positive and asymptomatic. This strategy will also enable health officials to identify exposure risk and put in place proper protocols needed to isolate individuals who have tested positive. This strategy adds another layer to our efforts to keep our schools as safe as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the saliva screening strategy involves self-administered saliva testing as a screener for staff and students at public and private school sites, in accordance with a schedule that is determined by the Government's Molecular Diagnostic La-

boratory [MDL]. That schedule will see 25 per cent of each school's student population who have given consent saliva tested every week. The results of the saliva tests are available within 48 hours and are sent to each individual's GP or physician.

Mr. Speaker, also in support of our efforts to keep our schools safe, parents and students were encouraged to participate in self-administered saliva testing this week at Penno's Wharf and the Star of India before school reopens on Monday. Several parents are taking advantage of the testing that will help keep our schools safe. Additionally, the Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory has arranged for self-administered saliva testing for staff, students and parents on Saturday, May 8th, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at St. Paul's Centennial Hall in Hamilton. I ask all parents, students and staff to get tested so that we together can make our schools safe.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me share that the Commissioner of Education is planning to hold Zoom town hall meetings with our school staff and parents next week Monday through Thursday during the evenings to share details about the saliva testing strategy and to answer any questions that they may have. Representatives from MDL will also be at the meetings to answer questions. More detailed information will be sent directly to parents via *The Scoop* newsletter which they receive directly from the Department of Education.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to the safety and well-being of all students and staff in our schools, and I thank officers at the Department of Health and the team at the Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory for working with the Department of Education to help keep our schools safe. We look forward to a safe reopening of schools on Monday, May 10th.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Transport.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, much has been said in the media recently about the payments being made to [Skyport under the minimum revenue guarantee](#) obligations as set out in the project agreement. Mr. Speaker, this Government takes all of its contractual obligations very seriously, and I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight and to provide all of the facts relating to these contractual payments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to clearly state from the outset that the Bermuda Airport Authority has met all of its contractual obligations to pay all amounts due and payable as part of the government's minimum revenue guarantee, which I will refer to from now on as the MRG. The Airport Authority has been required to make three MRG payments to date since July 2020, which I will cover shortly.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear there have been no overpayments by the Bermuda Airport Authority, because the Airport Authority's officers undertake extensive due diligence prior to advising me when an MRG payment is due. Mr. Speaker, I believe this bears repeating: *There have been no overpayments by the Bermuda Airport Authority.*

Mr. Speaker, the project agreement contains a predetermined payment schedule of the MRG amounts for each calendar quarter of the 30-year contract. The process is such that at the end of each quarter Skyport issues a report to the Airport Authority for the actual regulated revenues it has received for that particular quarter. If the actual regulated revenues received by Skyport are below the MRG threshold, then the Airport Authority must transfer funds in an amount equal to the difference into the guaranteed revenue reserve account, which is an escrow account in Skyport's name.

Mr. Speaker, the Airport Authority made two such MRG transfers in 2020, as follows: (1) in July 2020 in the sum of \$5,770,995.54; and (2) then in October 2020 in the sum of \$15,232,889.70. Mr. Speaker, the intent of these payments is to support Skyport's debt servicing.

Mr. Speaker, in December 2020, as per the project agreement, the escrow account was audited by an external, independent firm. The audit concluded that the account had in excess of approximately \$4.2 million. This amount was subsequently transferred by Skyport back to the Airport Authority.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of March Skyport reported that the actual regulated revenues it had received for the quarter were \$3,929,849.89 below the MRG threshold. As such, the Airport Authority was obligated to transfer that amount to the escrow account in April of 2021. This \$3.9 million payment was paid out of the \$4.2 million that Skyport was obligated to return to the Airport Authority back in December.

Mr. Speaker, this is a complex matter, and the Bermuda Airport Authority is doing an excellent job in managing it, along with all of its other contractual obligations and oversight responsibilities. I would like to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that the Bermuda Airport Authority has met all of its contractual obligations relating to the MRG payments, and this Government has [provided] and continues to provide the necessary funds to enable the Airport Authority to meet its contractual obligations.

There have been no overpayments by the Bermuda Airport Authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And that brings us to the close of the Ministerial Statements this morning. Ministers, there are some questions when we get to that point in the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: We have a report coming from the Deputy Speaker in regard to the Private Bills Committee.

Deputy Speaker.

PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEE REPORT ON: WALSINGHAM TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021 AND WILLOWBANK FOUNDATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2021

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To His Honour, the Speaker, and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly: The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Private Bills has the honour to submit the following report:

The Committee has carefully considered the petitions together with the related Bills for the Acts listed hereunder and is satisfied that the Bills are Private Bills and that all of the rules of both Houses having to do with Private Bills have been complied with:

- 1) Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021; and
- 2) Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Committee recommends that the Bills entitled the Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and the Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021 be accepted subject to agreed amendments.

Subject to the recommendations contained in [the preceding] paragraph 2, the committee recommends that the prayers of the petitioners be granted, and that leave be given to bring in the proposed Bills to give effect thereto.

All of which are respectfully submitted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

[Recommitted]

The Speaker: Members, I am going to seek your indulgence at this moment to allow us to return to an item that was on the Order Paper earlier which was not done at the time. We will return to the Papers and Other Communications to the House.

Mr. Premier, are you available now to present your paper?

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I am, and I thank you for allowing me to do this, and apologies for it not being indicated earlier.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

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

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Audited Financial Statements of the Office of the Information Commissioner for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2020.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, that now brings us to Question Period. As you know, there are 60 minutes allotted for this. There are no written questions this morning, so the only questions today are in reference to the Statements that were given by Ministers this morning.

At this stage, we have four Ministers who have questions [to answer] today. And the first is for the Deputy Premier in reference to his Statement on the Planning Department. That question is from MP Jackson.

MP, would you like to put your question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING STATISTICS AS AN INDICATOR OF THE STATE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: And good morning, Deputy Premier.

My question concerns the fact that . . . I would like to know what, given the fact that we have such a high volume of applications this year . . . I am just curious what consideration has been given for those who have been sheltering in place to be able to read or see the application notices and be able to submit any objections.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Minister, would you like to respond?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question.

The new system, Energov, which I referenced in my Statement, provides any member of the public the opportunity to see any submissions related to a properly filed application. So anybody can go online and properly gain access to the system and view any submissions related to an application.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am sorry.

Just as in the same way as they would have traditionally been able to visit the department and to view a file.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No supplementary. Thank you.

The Speaker: New question? No? Okay. Thank you, MP.

The next Statement this morning that has questions is that for the Minister of Finance.

Minister of Finance, you have a question this morning in reference to your Statement regarding the government guarantees. And that question is from the Opposition Leader.

Honourable Member, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: ISSUANCE OF NEW GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister: I accept the guarantees that he has provided to the BLDC [Bermuda Land Development Corporation]. But I would like to have a summary of the bigger picture of the guarantees outstanding at this point in time.

Can the Minister provide the names of all agencies that have outstanding guarantees at this time?

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, yes, I can provide the names of all of the agencies or quangos that have a guarantee outstanding at this point in time.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can he name them?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Housing Corporation, the West End Development Corporation, Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, Bermuda Hospitals Board, Morgan's Point, Bermuda Tourism Authority, Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission, Hotel Bermuda Holdings Ltd. and the Bermuda Land Development Corporation.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What about Bermudiana Beach Club?

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary, yes.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Bermudiana Beach Club?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I answered the question that the Member put to me. If I did not mention a name, then it means the guarantee has not yet been executed.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Fine.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any further questions?

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

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Just a [general] point of order that questions for publicly available information I think are not supposed to be allowed. And just for the information of the Honourable Member, the Opposition Leader, the answer the Minister of Finance just gave is clearly outlined in the Budget Book, as it is every year, of outstanding government guarantees.

So, the information is publicly available.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. With the—

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary or a new question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: A new question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: ISSUANCE OF NEW GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: With the new guarantee that he has brought here today, can the Minister of Finance provide the total value of the entire guarantee portfolio?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, that number I can provide, but I need to provide some context. And so, the number, the aggregation of all of the guarantees that I have listed for the names of the entities that I have just mentioned is \$612.1 million.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That number reflects the present value of the guarantees.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. That is right.

The Speaker: A supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: If we have assumed the risk for Morgan's Point, why is the \$165 million of guarantees still outstanding? Or is this . . . you have not brought it to a conclusion, as yet?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I believe in prior Statements in this House I made colleagues aware that the Government took the step of purchasing the bonds that were subject to guarantee in order to ensure that it had as many rights available to it as possible to recoup the money.

As of yet, the Government still is the holder of the debt instruments. And the guarantee remains outstanding, even though the guarantee is extensively for the Government itself.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or a new question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, that is it. He answered my question.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

The Speaker: The next Statement this morning that has questions is to the Attorney General in reference to her Statement regarding the update on government reform. And it is from MP Pearman.

MP, would you like to put your question at this point?

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT REFORM UPDATE—MEETING THE WELLNESS OBJECTIVE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Honourable and Learned Attorney General for her Statement to the House this morning on the Wellness Objective.

Honourable Attorney General, at page 6 of your Statement you referenced the World Health Organization and the estimate of [the number globally of] people who suffer from depression at 264 million by the WHO's estimate. That is approximately 3.3 per cent of the global population, which would translate in Bermuda terms to about 2,000 people, give or take, who would suffer here on our Island from depression.

My question is this: In view of the additional mental health concerns that we are experiencing owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, could you kindly share with the Honourable House what steps these government employees you spoke about can take if they are concerned about mental health issues? Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Madam Attorney General.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member.

Mr. Speaker, you will be aware and Members will be aware that there are initiatives within the Ministry of Health, also within the Ministry of Social Development which attend to this particular subject matter. And I would certainly be happy to liaise with my fellow Ministers to provide that information in detail if the Member so desires.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you for the answer, Honourable Attorney General.

Do you happen to know whether or not there has been an uptake or an increase in use of these resources over the past period of the pandemic?

The Speaker: Attorney General?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes. I certainly do not have the figures on that. But I do recall a statement that I made some time ago at the beginning of the pandemic where over . . . there was an uptake on reporting of particular instances of trauma, et cetera. And the corresponding services would have been made available to persons. But once again, those stats are not the subject of my particular Statement, which is more general and aimed at public officers. But we can certainly [INAUDIBLE] reach out to the necessary agencies. Or I can return that information to him, as previously stated.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Attorney General. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No further questions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

And the last Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Education.

Minister, you have questions from MP Jackson.

MP, would you like to put your question at this point?

QUESTION 1: SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Minister of Education.

On page 2 you had mentioned how critically important it is for staff and students to adhere to all safety and any safety protocols. I am just curious what consideration is being given to ensure that teachers are vaccinated.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Thank you for that question. As has been articulated in many forms and by the Government, vaccinations are not anything that anyone . . . it is a personal choice. It is recommended that they get vaccinated. We encourage them to seek the advice of their general physician and then make the decision to get vaccinated or not, based on that.

The Speaker: Supplementary or a further question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Supplementary.

Is any consideration being given to mandate vaccines for teachers and staff within the public education system?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, I repeat. It is not the remit of the Government to force people to get vac-

inations. They have been given ample opportunity. They were put as part of the phase 1 vaccination process. We gave a special window during the Easter break. And all we can do is encourage them to be vaccinated.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Second question.

The Speaker: Second question. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Has the Ministry of Education come up then with a contingency or a business continuity plan in case an unvaccinated teacher creates an outbreak within the schools?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question.

Whether they are vaccinated or not, a positive COVID-19 case will be handled with the appropriate guidelines that have been in place since we reopened schools in September.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Minister, Mr. Speaker, I have no further questions. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

Members, that brings us to the close of Question Period this morning.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I did have questions (MP Richardson) for Minister Burch. I'm thinking that the chat [message] did not work.

The Speaker: Okay. Let me browse back up to check. Actually, it is showing up now. It was not showing earlier.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It is showing.

Minister Burch. Is he still in? He may have . . . are you still there?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am here, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, good.

Minister, there is a question for you from the Opposition Whip.
Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: STIMULUS PROGRAMME THIRD UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Would the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House whether . . . in his Statement he said that a register of approved contractors and awarded contracts will be maintained. Will that register be made public?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: No.

The Speaker: Did you hear the answer?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary. Why would the register not be made public, given that other government contracts are published in the official *Gazette*?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The contracts that are awarded will be published as I listed this morning. And we will continue to do so as they are awarded.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.
Mr. Speaker, new question?

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: STIMULUS PROGRAMME THIRD UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Would the Honourable Minister inform the Honourable House that . . . in his Statement this morning, in the first paragraph he referred to the Short Term Stimulus Programme that would have a maximum value of \$13.3 million. Would he inform us how much of that fund has been committed to approved contractors and current projects at this time?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I do not have that information at hand. But I can easily get it.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplemental. Would the Minister commit to providing that information in the next update?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I will commit to providing it by email to the House probably this afternoon, but certainly by Monday.

The Speaker: Okay.
Have you got that, MP?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So I suppose my question would be to you. Would I then email the Clerk to get that information circulated?

The Speaker: No. We can put it up on the SharePoint.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It will be on SharePoint. Okay?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And last question, a new question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Your third question. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 3: STIMULUS PROGRAMME THIRD UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Third question.
Would the Honourable Minister inform the House when the next update on the Short Term Stimulus Programme will be made?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Certainly before the House rises. I do not think we will have much movement in the next two weeks. But as soon as there is something significant to report, I shall do so.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No. No supplementaries from me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you. Members, that closes out Question Period for us. And we will now move on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to make a contribution at this time?

[Pause]

The Speaker: No Members?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, I hear you. You have your three minutes.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like for the House to send condolences to the following families: Mr. Samuel Matthew, Ms. Dorothy Stephenson, Mr. Clint Simpson and Ms. Millicent Timothy, all who resided in Hamilton Parish and have passed since we last met. These folks will certainly be sorely missed by their families and the communities that they lived in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have your three minutes.

[No audible response]

The Speaker: MP, we see you but we do not hear you. We have lost your audio. MP? MP? MP Foggo.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes. Now we hear you.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Can you hear me?

The Speaker: We can hear you now.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Sorry.

I would like condolences to be sent out to the family of Mr. Walter Seymour. He was a centenarian. I think he made it to the age of 102. He would have celebrated his 103rd birthday this year if he were still with us. Mr. Seymour was a trailblazer. He was one of the first Blacks to establish a real estate agency. I can say that he definitely assisted me when I opened my real estate agency. He was the one who spoke up for me because that is part of the policy within the real estate world. To open up an agency, you must have someone who vouches for you who has practiced for years in that arena. Also, he was a support in many, many ways to other Black businessmen in his time. He will be sorely, sorely missed, I think, by all of Bermuda.

I would also like to extend condolences to the O'Connor family in St. David's on their loss of Mrs. [Betty] O'Connor.

And also [extend condolences] to the father [and] to the mother of St. David's resident, Carol-Ann. (I just cannot think of her last name right now.) I know

her family is listening. She died way too soon, Mr. Speaker. St. David's has suffered quite a few losses since we last sat. I just ask that condolences be sent out and that the families should know that we have them in our prayers.

I did think of one more person, Mr. Mark Lowe, the youngest brother to Larry Lowe. He too did pass just recently, and condolences to his family.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, Honourable Member.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy, we hear you. We don't see you—yes, there we go. Deputy Premier, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would definitely like to be associated with the comments of the Honourable Member for constituency 3, Lovitta Foggo, on the passing of Mr. Walter Seymour, whom I have known all of my life. [He] was a great friend of my parents. And he was certainly a pioneer and a colourful character in so many ways, a pillar of the Southampton community. And I went to school with his son, Lamar. And many of us know that his son Lamar was an outstanding Bermudian footballer. But I just want to associate myself with the comments in tribute of Mr. Walter Seymour, whom I have known literally all of my life.

I also would like to ask that the House note the passing of one of my constituents who was very active in the youth movement and also a staunch supporter of unionism, Mr. Mark Anthony Robinson, who passed away while we were out of—while the House was out. He was a resident more recently of the Packwood Home in Somerset. But he was an outstanding pillar of the North Shore community. He lived for many years near what was once the North Village Club. And certainly his daughter, Dorothy Seaman, and also his widow, Barbara Robinson—I would like to ensure that they are given the opportunity to know that we noted his passing. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. I will just assist you and include his sons in that, his sons Daniel and Richard, as well.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for assisting me. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Richard was my classmate. Thank you, Deputy.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is Wayne Furbert.

The Speaker: Yes. Go right ahead.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, we have recently lost too many lives in Bermuda recently. I am sure Parliament would like condolences sent out to all of the families who have lost loved ones since the last Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, my heart and deepest condolences go out to the family of one of my constituents, Ms. Marjorie Pat Whitter, of Hamilton Parish. Mr. Speaker, she was a kind and gentle person. She was a member of Bethel AME Church. And she was President of the Usher Board for a while. She has made so many of us—and greeted us with a great smile as we entered Bethel Church from time to time. Mr. Speaker, I can imagine her standing at the gates of heaven right now shaking hands and giving them a great smile as they enter in.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the family of Ms. Whitter, may I say that although it is difficult today to see beyond the sorrow, may looking back in memory help comfort you today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I hear three voices. One sounded female. I am going to put the female ahead of you gentlemen; how is that? Is that all right?

An Hon. Member: That is good, sir.

The Speaker: Attorney General.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my remarks to those of MP Foggo with regard to Carol-Ann. Carol-Ann's full name is Carol-Ann Lavette Bailey Vernon. She is known to me and all of our friends who grew up with her as Carol-Ann. Carol-Ann was a happy soul, a young soul, a hard-working soul, a mother of two young men, a wife, and a wonderful daughter and sister. She was also a valued employee at the Happy Valley Day Care where she was the cook. On behalf of my family, on behalf of all of our childhood friends, I send our prayers and blessings to her family during this very, very difficult time. To her brother, Ervin and her Aunt Carlana, her father Roland, we all send our deepest prayers and condolences.

Also, Mr. Speaker, to the family and friends of Ernest Thomas Charles Cann, who was a well-known taxi driver up in the West End, one of my constituents, I would like to send my condolences, continued condolences to his family and friends at this very difficult time. And to all of us to be mindful that we [INAUDIBLE] as we work our way through this unfortunate and strickening pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Attorney General.
Would any other Member—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have your three minutes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family of Vivian Griffiths. Ms. Griffiths is the mother of Antoinette Cannonier, one of the Honourable Members in the House of Assembly, former Premier Craig Cannonier's, wife. So I would like to send condolences to Antoinette and her brother, Anthony Vickers. This lady was a lovely lady, a charming lady, a gentle lady. And I am sure she will be missed by the family. And my prayers and the House prayers to MP Cannonier and his lovely wife, Antoinette.

I would like to also send condolences to the family of the late Eugene Thomas who passed recently in a motorcycle accident. These should go to his wife, Pat, and the rest of the family.

I would like to also send condolences to [the family of] Ms. Mary Moulder. She is the matriarch of the Moulder family, a loving, caring lady. She was involved intimately with St. Mark's Church. And she died suddenly and peacefully. So we wish her family all the very best during these difficult times.

I would like to also associate myself with the comments that were made in regard to Mark Lowe, Walter Seymour and the late Pat Whitter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Minister of Education, would you like to make your contribution now?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I would like to have condolences sent to the family of the late Vincent Bruce Swan, a constituent of mine who died earlier this week. I did speak and reach out to his son to offer my condolences. And I know that is a great loss for the family down there in Devonshire.

And I would also like to send—I am unsure if this was said before. But I would like to send con-

lences to the family of the late Rev. Malcolm Eve, former presiding elder of the AME Church and pastor of St. Philip AME Church, that little church on the sound down there in Smith's Parish just off Devil's Hole, another constituent of mine.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can you send that on behalf of the House?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Well, I am sure that we can assign the whole House to those condolences to the Eve family.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And I would also like to send congratulations to all of the teams that competed in the KPMG Investment Challenge, and special congratulations to Chatmore International School, which competed for the first time this year and ended up finishing second. Congratulations to the team from Warwick Academy, who finished first, and the team from Bermuda Institute, who finished third.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker! Mr. Speaker!

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Speaker, MP Simmons-Wade.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade, you have your three minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Thank you.

I would like to associate myself with the passing of the late Rev. Malcolm Eve. I worked very closely with him until [INAUDIBLE] seniors' home. I am also with the late Eugene, the young Eugene Thomas, whom I met about 10 years ago. And somehow we kept crossing paths on a regular basis as we walked on South Shore. And a wonderful, wonderful gentleman.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Simmons. You have your three minutes, sir.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, sir. I just rise today on a sad note to commemorate and acknowledge the passing of Mr. Vincent Butterfield, a resident of constituency 33 and a staunch supporter of the party of which I am proud to be a

member. I would like to extend my deepest condolences, the condolences of the House and the condolences of my family to his daughters, Dawn and Corynne, and to all of those whose lives have been touched by him, his wife, everyone who loved and cared for him. Mr. Speaker, his loss to the family is a loss to the community.

And before I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, it is a sad thing that we are facing in this country with the deaths from COVID-19. And there are a number of very sad stories that unfortunately the families know and we cannot tell because it would be inappropriate to divulge people's health conditions and experiences. But for those of us who have seen families wracked by this disease, who have seen people's health permanently damaged by this disease, it is something to no longer—if you ever took it as a joke, it certainly is no longer the case to do so. My prayers go out to those families. My prayers go out to all of those who are recovering. And my prayers go out to those who are still trying to overcome the lingering effects of this disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It sounds like MP Weeks?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, sir. Good morning.

The Speaker: MP Weeks, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off my remarks by asking to be associated with the remarks for Mr. Walter Seymour. I too have known Mr. Seymour and his family most of my life. I was actually in prep school with his son, Andre. I learned a little style from Mr. Seymour. So he is going to definitely be sorely missed.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to associate myself with the loss of Ms. Carol-Ann Vernon. I know her two sons well. I worked with Jerome at Boulevard Community Club. And he is a very good football player. And mom was always there on hand to support our children. So our whole community will miss her.

Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note, I would like to send congratulations to Ms. Julie Peets. She is the wife of Dr. Ernest Peets. She just recently graduated from school in Florida and has received a Bachelor's of Science in Education for Early Childhood Education, actually. So I would like to send out [congratulations] to Dr. Peets, Julie, and their family.

An Hon. Member: Associate myself, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send congratulations to another one of my constituents, actually, Ms. Dakia O'Brien and her daughter, Rhielle, I think Rhielle Ming, who is only about six or seven. But Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Speaker, has actually made lemonade out of this pandemic to start an online business called the Picky Little Eaters Club. It is a cooking show, Mr. Speaker, for moms and their children. So, well done to her, and I take my hat off! And I wish her well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Minister Ming, I see your face there popping up in between everyone. Are you trying to get my attention?

Hon. Renee Ming: I am, Mr. Speaker. How are you?

The Speaker: Minister Ming, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to extend condolences to the families of Mr. Mark Robinson, and also to the family of Andre Durham, aka "Turtle." I know both of these families, and I am sending prayers for Aunt Barbara, and all of the brothers for Mr. Mark Robinson.

I would also like to be associated, Mr. Speaker, with the comments and the condolences for the families of Carol-Ann Vernon, Betty O'Connor, Aunt Pat Whitter, and of course Malcolm Eve. I am just hoping that the families are managing through this difficult time and just know that, even from our level, our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. All right. Go right ahead, sir.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences that the Honourable Attorney General extended to [the friends and family of] Ernest Cann, whom I got to see quite a bit of in recent years through his being a taxi ambassador. But anyone who knew Ernest Cann back in the day knew that he was amongst the best dancers in Bermuda, par excellence. And in his later years he only had one leg. And I reminded those young guys who used to see him and say, *Hey, Unc!* I said, *That bye could move*

across that dance floor as good as Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Michael Jackson all rolled up in one. May he rest in peace, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, whilst I am touching on the arts, Mr. Clarence "Tootsie" Bean—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Hold on, hold on.

Minister of Education, you need to turn your microphone off.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Go ahead, go ahead, MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes. And I will associate the Minister for Education with this because I know he is his family member. But Clarence "Tootsie" Bean and Mrs. Bean both passed away very recently, Mr. Speaker. And I know it is a tremendous blow for their family, particularly their son, Sheldon, and daughter Donna. But Clarence "Tootsie" Bean I know as a golfer, an outstanding golfer from Ocean View and an outstanding musician who helped transform Bermuda through his great expertise in the arts and sports. And certainly I am very saddened by his passing. And condolences go out to his family.

And I associate with condolences to the former Presiding Elder Eve and to the Griffiths family, who once lived down there in Cut Road, as well, on the passing of Ms. Griffiths that the Opposition Leader expressed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Swan, I am going to ask you to associate the whole House with the passing of the Beans, Mr. and Mrs. Bean.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I associate the entire House with the passing of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence "Tootsie" Bean.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

MP Campbell.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, you have your three minutes, MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: I would like to associate myself with the condolences sent out to the families of Mr. Andre Durham and Mr. Vincent Butterfield. Mr. Durham's son is a member of my family—well, he is a member of my family and his son is a member of the

Young Men's Social Club Senior Team. Mr. Butterfield was a long-term member of Young Men's Social Club and will be a great miss to the social club nation.

On a positive note, I would like to send out congratulations to Mr. Anthony Levon Swan. Mr. Swan recently received his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Buckingham. Now, Mr. Swan is a young man who made some mistakes. He accepted responsibility for his mistakes. And now I believe he is an example to many young men who have also made mistakes in their life that you can overcome these mistakes. And they do not have to hold you back. And you can be successful. And Mr. Swan is now pursuing a Master's of Law degree, and I wish him and his family all of the best in his endeavours. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Associate me, Honourable Member, please.

The Speaker: Yes. Honourable Member Swan would like to be associated with those remarks. Thank you.

Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say a few words.

The Speaker: It sounds like MP Jackson. MP.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

I would just like to associate myself with the [condolences on the] passing of Vivian Griffiths, the mother of Antoinette Cannonier and mother-in-law of MP Cannonier. And I would send out my heartfelt condolences at this time.

I would also like to send condolences to the family and friends of Don Jolliffe. He has been a long-serving and most committed war veteran here in Bermuda. He supported the veterans for many, many years and would annually walk in the parade in November. He was an avid golfer, and he really had and lived a full life. And he remained very close to the family, who will be very sorry that he is gone. And he will certainly be a miss in the community.

On a brighter side, I would like to send congratulations to Eve De Rosa, who has just recently been elected Dean of Faculty at Cornell University. I mean, I just cannot even imagine the accolade of achieving that kind of position. Not only is she the first woman, but she is also the first Black person to hold that position at Cornell University in New York. And I am just sending out all of the pride that we have for this Bermudian who has done so well in her professional development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Jackson.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Honourable Members are being asked to be associated with that. So we will associate the other Members in the House.

MP Dunkley, I believe you would like to make a contribution.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you and good morning to colleagues.

I would like to be associated with the congratulations sent by the Honourable Member Campbell to Anthony Swan on the successful completion of his initial law degree. The young man reached out to me a number of years ago as he started his journey. And I have been quite impressed with his fortitude and his commitment to move forward, and really enjoyed the relationship that we built. And he is certainly a shining example, as MP Campbell said. I wish him all the best, and congratulations to him.

Mr. Speaker, as many colleagues have done, I would like to be associated with condolences that have been offered certainly to the O'Connor family on the passing of Mrs. O'Connor. One of her sons has worked for me for many, many years. And I have grown to know the family quite well. And what a good family they are. So I would like to be associated with the condolences to those.

And also with the condolences on the passing of Presiding Elder Eve, who gave many years in service to our community in faith. And he should be recognised and thanked for that.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if it has been done, but I would like for condolences to be sent to the family of Mr. Richard Bascome, Sr., who passed away a couple of weeks ago. Mr. Bascome I have known for all of my life. In fact, I knew his father, a true son of the soil, Richard Bascome, Sr., who loved what he did. He loved Bermuda. And one of the good things about Mr. Bascome that I always appreciated is he always had time for conversation. And he never harboured any grudges against people. He was always committed to trying to help people. And I would like to send condolences to his family on the passing of Mr. Bascome.

An Hon. Member: I would like to be associated with that, please.

Another Hon. Member: I would like to be associated as well with that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am going to ask that the Honourable Member associate the whole House. Because I know all of the Somerset MPs would like to be associated as well.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to also tangent on what the Honourable Member Simmons had said in regard to condolences. Now more than ever this section of business in the House has more meaning because we cannot attend funerals in person in the numbers we would like to. And we have seen a lot of tragedy over the past year. And family and friends take a lot of comfort from the recognition that we bring. So I congratulate MPs for reaching out in whatever way they can through this difficult period to bring some comfort and strength to the families who grieve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister Furbert, are you—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to be associated with the comments already made in regard to Ms. Carol-Ann Bailey [Vernon], who worked for the Happy Valley Child Care Centre. She will be sorely missed through the Department of Child & Family Services staff. And we would just like to send condolences out on behalf of the Ministry to the family of Ms. Carol-Ann Bailey [Vernon].

As well as be associated with Mr. Clint Simpson, again someone who will be sorely missed throughout the community of Hamilton Parish. People will know him from his work at Jamaican Grill. And so condolences to the Simpson family for the loss of Clint.

I am wanting to send out a congratulations to one of my constituents, Ms. Tina Laws, who is the new Executive Director of the Women's Resource Centre. And I am just wanting to send congratulations to her and her family after this new position. And also to congratulate the outgoing executive director, Ms. Elaine Butterfield, also of the Women's Resource Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? Any other Member?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

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

The Speaker: Premier, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks, I would certainly like to be associated with the condolences which have been already offered to the family of the great Rev. Malcolm Eve, certainly, and also to the families of Mr. Walter Seymour. One of the pleasures of this job, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that it is a tradition that the Premier visits people on their 100th birthday. And I was able to visit Mr. Walter Seymour in Southampton at a very large party, pre-COVID-19 certainly, for his 100th birthday. I was also attended there with his MP, MP Zane De Silva. And I certainly would like to make sure that he is associated with the notes of condolences which are sent to the family of Mr. Seymour.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to send or ask this Honourable House to send condolences to the family of the late Mr. Derek Ingham of Ingham's Vale in Pembroke. Mr. Ingham was not just my constituent, Mr. Speaker, but also a member of our local branch executive. And he would often take the time to canvass one side with me in constituency 18. Mr. Ingham was a strong and passionate and committed trade unionist, someone who was always involved with trade unionism. And he was committed and passionate in doing whatever he could do not only to improve the conditions inside of his country, but also to improve the conditions inside of his neighbourhood and to serve his community. We were certainly shocked and saddened to learn of his passing in his 70th year. And he will be missed by all of us inside of our constituency. But I wish to [say] to Linda, Cleave, Dwight, Chimere and Gina, to all of his friends, my thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. And I am happy to associate other Members who wish to be associated with that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to send congratulations. I would like to be associated with the congratulations that were sent to Mr. Anthony Levon Swan, a young man whom I got to know over the times. And it is a wonderful story of redemption and perseverance. And the recognition that errors and mistakes and bad judgments in our young years do not have to cloud our lives in the future. And he is certainly a shining example to many inside of our community. And I enjoy the interactions that I am able to have with him.

What I would also say, Mr. Speaker, is and finally, I would like to extend congratulations to Ms. Toniiae Smith, who was yesterday retired after 31 years of public service, finishing in the Cabinet Office

as administrator. She has worked in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Security and the Cabinet Office. And I would like to thank Ms. Smith for her decades of service to the Government, the people of Bermuda. And I certainly wish her much joy and happiness as she retires.

The Speaker: You could associate me with that, Premier. She was a classmate of mine, as well. She was a classmate of mine.

Hon. E. David Burt: No problem. No problem, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to associate you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: And I am certain that there are other Members and Ministers whom she would have served. And I am happy to have them associated with those remarks—I am sure the former Premier and former Minister of National Security, as well.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Premier.

No other Members? No other Members?

Well, before we move on I would just like to be associated and make a couple of remarks, myself. Firstly, I would like to be associated with the remarks that were expressed to the Bascome family on the passing of Richie. And in the younger years of my life, I spent some time on the farm with the Bascome family there, back and forth with some of my cousins. So he will be missed in our community. He was always a very positive gentleman.

I would like to add to that, the condolences this morning, a constituent of mine, Ms. Lenora Ible who passed during the time that we have been recessed from here. And I single out Ms. Ible because those of us who stood on the polls in 2017 will relate to this story. For the branch that I am associated with in my political life over the years, she has been one of those who was very active as a member. But on that particular morning in 2017, those of us who stood on the poll will remember it was pouring rain, hard, hard rain when the polls opened that morning. And the first person to the polls, who walked—she was supposed to get a ride. But she walked in the hard, pouring rain to be the first person to be the vote that day—and in her senior years as she was then. That showed the type of commitment that she had to the organisation that she was in support of. And I just acknowledge her as one of those who was always positive in conversation around the branch that I was associated with.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the passing of Cecily Anne Smith, who will be funeralised today. She was a cousin of mine, and my condolences go out to her son, Edmond Jr., and her twin daughters, Sharon and Karen.

And also to another constituent, Ms. Ismay Barker of the Barker family, to her son, Sherman

Swan, and her daughter, Norma Smith. Ms. Barker was one of those senior members who was always extremely, extremely positive whenever you took the time to stop by and chat and talk to her not only just about why you were canvassing in the area, but just about life in general. And I will surely miss those chats that I have had with her over the years.

And also, another constituent, Mr. Joseph “Bo” Smith. Condolences to his wife, May, and his daughter, Selena, on the passing of their [husband and] father. And again I know that even though he had been in the rest home for the last few years, he will surely still be missed greatly by both his wife and daughter and his grandchildren. My condolences go out to them on that loss.

With that, we will now move on.

Oh, sorry. I cannot go without including myself in the condolence remarks to the family of Mr. Walter Seymour. For those of you who know my business relationship over the years, Walter J. Seymour was part of the Lister operations for a number of years. And Mr. Seymour, much has been mentioned about him as a pioneer. Truly what has been spoken was about his early days in the real estate. But what has been left out was that he was one of the key players behind one of the early efforts to bring about a community bank many, many years ago. And it spoke to the type of foresight that he as a pioneer had for Bermuda. And that type of foresight will always be valued in what has made Bermuda what it is today. And he will surely, surely be missed by not only his family, but for what he has done for our community. Thank you.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: We have four Bills to be introduced this morning, Government Bills, the first in the name of the Minister of Finance.

FIRST READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bills for their first reading so that they might be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021, and the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. You did them both at the same time. Good.

The next is from the Attorney General.
Minister.

FIRST READING

LIQUOR LICENCE (FEE REDUCTION) TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 23 be suspended so that I may introduce the following Bill so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for today's sitting, namely, the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you. And the next Bill would be in the name of the Minister of National Security.

FIRST READING

FIRE SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I am 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 Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
There are no other Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The first Order on the Order Paper this morning is the second reading of the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 in the name of the Premier.
Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.
Continue, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. (One second, Mr. Speaker.)

[Pause]

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

The Speaker: Just for your information, we will break at 12:30 as usual for lunch.

Hon. E. David Burt: I sincerely hope so, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

BILL

SECOND READING

GAMING (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) ACT 2021

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, every innovation requires a framework within which to operate and a proper level of legislative underpinning to ensure best practice and efficient operation. The Bill before this Honourable House represents such a framework.

Mr. Speaker, the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 makes a series of consequential amendments to a variety of statutes for the purpose of expanding the regulatory remit of the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission. The Bill will also make the Commission responsible for the regulation of casino gaming, betting, cruise ships' casinos, lotteries, raffles and also Crown and Anchor.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission will also now collect all associated fees, levies and taxes resulting from its new responsibilities for these sectors. However, Honourable Members will recall that this does not extend to betting duty. That regime will remain unchanged for the near term as we consider whether the current duty structure is fit for purpose.

Mr. Speaker, while it is not germane to this Bill before this Honourable House, it would be remiss of me if I did not use this opportunity to advise Honourable Members and the public on the progress made by the Commission in a number of various areas. Hon-

ourable Members will recall the Commission welcomed a new CEO in late 2020. And I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the Commission has now successfully recruited a chief regulatory officer who will be responsible for the management of the Commission's regulatory functions, compliance of licences, as well as the development and implementation of a regulatory assurance strategy. Additionally, the posts of director of legal and a new compliance inspector have also been filled.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is on the cusp of the opening of a much-needed luxury hotel property in the form of the St. Regis in St. George's. That property will have a casino as a critical amenity in support of the visitor experience for guests. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the extensive due diligence and suitability assessment required for consideration of the casino licence for St. Regis is well underway and is 60 per cent completed. Five gaming vendors have been approved. The gaming equipment and technical specifications and standards of performance have been finalised, and six centres approved, all of which can be viewed on the Commission's website.

Honourable Members will also recall that the principal Act makes provision for a Problem Gaming Council. I can also advise that a negotiated MOU has been executed with a renowned international council [on Problem Gaming] to promote an exchange of information and the development of best practice.

Mr. Speaker, as I commend this Bill for the consideration of the House, I wish to thank the members of the Commission and the team working there. I must also take note of the incredible cooperation of the Hotelco St. Regis team, who have attended to the detailed process of applying for casino licence patiently, determined to procure the grant for the licence to operate Bermuda's first hotel casino. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

First, I would like to start by stating that we support this legislation. We think it is the right thing to do in regard to shifting the responsibility of the industry to the Commission. Having said that, I just have a couple of comments that I would like to make before we get into Committee.

This legislation is a long time coming. As we know, the initial legislation was approved in 2014, and seven years later we are still working at it. As the

Premier said, it will take time, and it has truly taken time to mature, so to speak. To date the Premier indicated that he has a new CEO and a new chief regulatory officer and a new legal and compliance executive. I am delighted that we have that on board. I am just hoping that we are able to retain them, because this organisation has had a very interesting history. Over the past six years we have seen change of the board, our key employees. And I think whatever issues that arose which caused this departure of highly respectable professionals to leave before has been addressed and will continue to be addressed under the current leadership.

They were committed to the progression of the gaming industry. And as I said, they were knowledgeable people. In fact, one gentleman was responsible for the KYC [know your customer] and AML [anti-money laundering] protocols in Ontario. So again, these are people who know what they are doing. And I am just disappointed that they all retired from the roles that they previously had. So I am just hoping and praying that the new executive team and the professionals within the team will be here for the long haul.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I would like to speak to is the issue of financing. I know that we had, as a government, paid in excess of \$3.7 million in grants to this agency. And as far as the industry is concerned, one would have to question what value to the community—not the organisation, the *community*—have we seen? Because as I said earlier, after 2015, we are now in 2021, we still do not have gaming. We do not have any new jobs in the gaming industry. There is nothing; no new amenities that this could bring to tourism. There is no extra revenue that will be generated that can go into our Consolidated Fund. So I am hoping that, as the Premier said, we will have the gaming industry finally taking off by the middle of the third quarter so that the hotels in St. George's will be up and running and they can lead the way in providing gaming in this country.

The other issue that I would like to speak to is the issue of the cashless gaming. A lot has been said about cashless gaming. In fact, back in August I think the Premier made a comment in the media that he had two major stakeholders who had agreed to support cashless casino gaming. Can he provide details of who those major stakeholders are that have agreed to provide cashless gaming?

In fact, what does "cashless gaming" mean? I spoke to one of the developers, and they are not 100 per cent sure as to what the Premier means by "cashless gaming." So can he today provide details on what cashless gaming will mean to Bermuda and what cashless gaming will mean to this industry?

I looked at the website, Mr. Speaker, for the Commission. And the only thing that I could find in regard to financials is the financial statement for the year 2015, September 1st 2015 to March 31st, 2017. So, the question that I have for the Minister is, Where

do we stand with these reports? I understand that the 2019 financial statements may be finished and may be sitting in the Auditor General's Office. So I would like for the Premier to provide an update on where we stand on the finances, because at the end of the day we have committed in excess of \$4 million to this organisation. And those funds should be accounted for, and the people of Bermuda should be satisfied that they are getting value for money in regard to the funds invested in this organisation.

In addition, I would like to question whether the Government intends to make further grants to this organisation at this point in time. I know . . . I understand they may not have issued a grant last year. I just would like to have clarity in that space.

The Problem Gaming Council . . . I am delighted that we have that in place to support the community, to support individuals who have addiction problems when it comes to the gaming industry. And this is the social support net that I think is well needed if we are to have this industry. I looked at the membership of that committee that was in place in 2017 when the report was crafted. And I presume that they still are on the council today. The membership from the initial council appears to be well-qualified and capable. And I have been advised that they have been working very, very hard and that they are supporting the gaming industry as it stands today.

And so I would like to lend them support, and I would invite the Government to give them the resources and support that they need so that we would have a proper safety net to support those individuals who find themselves in a challenging position because of an addiction to gaming or other activities that would find them on the negative side of their lifestyle because of their involvement in gaming.

I would like to also state that the Gaming Commission, they said their mission is to establish and regulate a sustainable casino gaming industry in Bermuda. Obviously, this mission will be updated. And I would ask that the Premier also provide details on the values and the principles under which this Gaming Commission will operate. I think that if Bermuda is clear with the principles of the commission, then they will know that the operation of the Commission will be principles-based and the Government will be principles-based as well.

Mr. Speaker, on the banking side, I would invite the Premier to also provide details on where we stand on the banking side in regard to supporting this industry, whether it is cashless gaming or traditional gaming with fiat currency. Can he provide an update as to where we stand on the matter of gaming banking in regard to supporting this industry? Because obviously we cannot progress without a bank. And that information will be crucial in resolving the gaming puzzle as we move forward in this country.

The last point that I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, and it is in the legislation so it could come up

in Committee. I think I will leave it until we are in Committee and address it then, Mr. Speaker.

So with those remarks, I would just like to thank the Government for bringing this legislation through. And we in the Opposition in principle support what is here. And I will be happy to bring up any other questions that I have when we are in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, yes. You have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Premier, for presenting the Bill. And I note the comments of the Opposition Leader, that the Opposition is in support of the Bill.

I just have but one question, and that relates to the issue of problem gaming. The Bill identifies that it is intended to expand the functions of the Problem Gaming Council. And I would be grateful if the Premier could share with the Honourable House as part of his response to the questions by the Opposition Leader, in addition, whether or not there will be more funding allocated to the Problem Gaming Council in view of the fact that the Bill has expanded its functions.

Thank you, Honourable Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is all I have to say. I may have some questions in Committee.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There are none.

Mr. Premier.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I do have some questions. MP Richardson.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, yes. Put your question.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have questions as it relates to our international standing for casinos, for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, we were assessed for compliance with international money-laundering norms. And we were very successful in that assessment, and we did quite well in Bermuda. Also, we have conducted a national risk assessment which looks at the threat and vulnerabilities in Bermuda of money laundering. Part of this

entire assessment and part of this entire regulated space as it relates to money laundering concerns casinos and gaming in Bermuda.

So, with that being said, I would like to ask the Premier if some steps that have been spoken about in our submissions to those international authorities have been undertaken. In the first instance in our national risk assessment, we said that casinos had a low risk of money laundering because there was none. But internationally, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force said that they are inherently high risk for money laundering from a global perspective. Bermuda committed to real and potential money laundering vulnerabilities being assessed prior to the opening of the first casino. Given that we are on the cusp of doing that now, I would ask the Honourable Premier if we have undertaken that assessment and what, if any, impact has that had to the legislation and the Gaming Commission? Further . . . I think that is just it for that one. Yes. That is just it for this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution? No other Member?

Mr. Premier. Mr. Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the questions of which will be answered. I will try to go in the first order.

I can say that in response to the questions from the Honourable Member for constituency 23, I think we will be discussing more of those things when we get to the next Bill in regard to the Betting Act 2021, as we will recognise that on a casino basis. We certainly have undertaken risk assessments before making any substantive changes to the legislation which may impact money laundering risks.

On the issue of betting, that is the precise reasons for the upgrades to [the] betting framework. But in regard to [the] casino gaming framework, our framework is robust, and I am confident that it will continue to meet any international standards, as we do have a very (I would say) robust anti-money laundering framework here in Bermuda. And this Bill certainly has been vetted by the National Anti-Money Laundering Committee and certainly conforms with the necessary best practice.

In regard to the Problem Gaming Council and the expansion of its remit, the expansion of remit of the Problem Gaming Council—this is in response to the question from the Member from constituency 22—is to attend to all gaming sectors. Before, we were certainly just dealing with casino gaming, but there could be broader impacts when it comes to problem gaming. So that is the reason why that remit has been expanded. Certainly we are looking at betting and other things out there. So we do not want it to just be

casinos. The ambit has been expanded for all types and forms of betting.

In regard to the question with additional funding, this will be provided, the funding matters and those items will be left up to the commission as they manage their budget and present it to the Minister. So I am not going to prejudge in any way, shape or form how those allocations will be made. I will just go, and I think that goes on to the questions which came from the Opposition Leader in recognising that gaming is difficult. And the reason why gaming is difficult is because the regulatory needs for gaming are significant. And the plan, or proposal, that was put forward by the former Government did not envision—in some cases things were done which were not based on realistic expectations of a gaming industry. And so it is a very difficult balance.

We have provided additional . . . we have provided, I would say, from the perspective of the Casino Gaming Commission and its funding, after weeks of negotiations between client and the NTB the Casino Gaming Commission has secured an increase of borrowing facility with the NTB at a lower interest rate of 4.25 per cent. And this has been reduced from a previous 6 per cent interest rate. And they have agreed more favourable terms regarding administrative fees, and therefore is going to be saving the Gaming Commission \$100,000 this fiscal year. But we have to recognise that we have casinos, only one prospective casino at this point in time. Standing up the operations and the regulatory framework of making sure that we comply with international obligations is difficult.

So I would say that the regulatory burden right now does not match up to the revenue of which can be collected. Now, we are going to be expanding the areas of revenue collection. And what we want to make sure we can do is grow the industry. And there will be more casinos that will be coming online, which may help to assist in that area. But it is a difficult circumstance because the structure of gaming as was laid out, envisioning three casinos only, and the regulatory burden to operate those three casinos will cost far in excess of what even most generous projections by the former Government could have done.

So it is a difficult circumstance. And from that perspective, I will say that we are continuing to balance the difficulty of making sure that we execute on the budgets of which were made by the Government of Bermuda, even though they were not made by this Government; but they were made by the Government of Bermuda for the St. Regis Hotel. And we are going to stand up the regulatory regime in order to ensure that it can withstand international scrutiny to make sure that banking matters can be handled.

But I think it is key and critical to note that this is not something that right now is generating a profit for the country. On an overall and broad basis, additional amenities for hotel properties, the additional employment of which it will provide that are not direct-

ly attributing to the Gaming Commission will probably make an overall benefit to the country. But right now these are investments which need to be made to make sure that we enhance the regulatory framework.

In regard to processes and progress when it comes to banking, those conversations continue with banking partners. And there was back and forth. There were some requests for changes to the legislation. I will be quite broad and frank on that. And there were requests which came that have represented a fundamental misunderstanding of the Gaming Commission legislation as it stood. And the requests would actually make the protections in the Casino Gaming Act weaker, not stronger. So those discussions continue to be held. And I have no doubt we will reach the conclusion, as I know that there are, whether it is the St. Regis, whether it is other hotel properties, whether it is others—want to make sure that we can move forward with gaming in Bermuda. And I have no doubt that we will be able to resolve those particular issues, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I believe that I have answered all of the questions. And I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill be now committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

House in Committee at 12:14 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

GAMING (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Gaming \(Transfer of Functions\) Act 2021](#). Premier Burt, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, you will note that there are a significant number of clauses in this Bill. So I am going to try to do them by section. I am going to do the extraordinary move of moving clauses 1 through 30 at this time, if I may.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 provides for the regulation of all forms of gaming to be transferred to the Bermuda Ca-

sino Gaming Commission and for the functions of the Problem Gaming Council in relation to problem gaming to apply to all forms of gaming.

Clauses 3 through 30 amend the Casino Gaming Act 2014 (“the Gaming Act”) in consequence of the transfer and expansion of functions effected by clause 2.

Clause 4 renames the Casino Gaming Act [2014] to the “Gaming Act 2014” and makes related changes to the citation clause.

Clause 5 amends section 2 of the Gaming Act to rename the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission “the Bermuda Gaming Commission” and make other related changes to reflect the transfer of regulatory functions over all forms of gaming to the Bermuda Gaming Commission (the Commission). Such changes include inserting the term “gaming legislation,” which now includes the Gaming Act 2014, the Betting Act 2021, the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Act 2013 and the Lotteries Act 1944.

Clause 6 amends section 3 of the Gaming Act to streamline the meaning of “associate” in accordance with the transfer of regulatory functions over all forms of gaming to the Commission.

Clauses 7 through 12 amend various sections under Part 2 of the Gaming Act relevant to the transfer of regulatory functions over all forms of gaming to the Commission.

Clause 13 amends section 24 of the Gaming Act to increase the penalty for an offence under that section from \$2,880 to \$10,000. Section 24 deals with the powers of an auditor in relation to the financial transactions of the Commission. This amendment seeks to harmonise the penalties between the gaming and betting regimes.

Clause 14 repeals section 31 of the Gaming Act (which prohibits the operation of a casino without a licence), as this is now provided for, via the Bill, under Part 12 of the Gaming Act.

Clause 15 amends section 37 of the Gaming Act (which deals with updating an application for a casino licence) to increase the penalty for an offence under that section from \$2,880 to \$10,000. This amendment seeks to harmonise the penalties between the gaming and betting regimes.

Clause 16 repeals and replaces section 51 of the Gaming Act to enable a casino operator who is aggrieved by a decision of the Commission in relation to his casino licence to appeal to the court against that decision.

Clause 17 amends section 84 of the Gaming Act (which deals with the failure to return a special employee licence on suspension or cancellation) to increase the penalty for an offence under that section from \$2,880 to \$10,000.

Clause 18 amends section 91 of the Gaming Act to require the Commission’s approval of games to be made by notice in writing and to require publication of the list of games, mode of play and rules for ap-

proved games on the Commission's official website. This change harmonises this provision of the Gaming Act with corresponding provisions under the Casino Regulations.

Clause 19 amends section 114 of the Gaming Act to increase the minimum duration of an exclusion order from 30 days to 6 months.

Clause 20 repeals and replaces section 121A of the Gaming Act to substitute the reference to "casino employee" with "staff member" of a casino.

Clause 21 repeals and replaces section 129 of the Gaming Act to provide for a fine not exceeding \$10,000 in relation to offences under Part 7. Note that any minor committing an offence will be dealt with in accordance to the Young Offenders Act 1950.

Clauses 22 through 24 amend various sections under Part 10 of the Gaming Act to enable the functions of the Problem Gaming Council to apply to all forms of gaming.

Clause 25 inserts into Part 12 of the Gaming Act new sections 167A through 167G. These sections make it an offence, except in accordance with a licence or approval to (i) offer or engage in gaming; (ii) offer or provide a gaming service; (iii) possess, sell, or supply gaming machines; (iv) use gaming machines; or (v) import gaming machines. This clause also provides for the forfeiture of gaming machines and enables the Minister to make regulations restricting the use, possession, importation, sale or supply of any gaming equipment.

Clause 26 amends section 170 of the Gaming Act to streamline the provision relating to cheating at play.

Clause 27 inserts new Part 12A into the Gaming Act to provide for conduct that will be exempt for the purposes of the Act.

Clauses 28 and 29 amend sections 196 and 200, respectively, of the Gaming Act which relate, respectively, to the making of regulations by the Minister and to the issuance of guidelines by the Commission. Such amendments are to account for the transfer of regulatory functions for all forms of gaming to the Commission.

Clause 30 gives effect to Schedule 1 of the Bill, which provides for minor amendments to the Gaming Act.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Are there any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Chair recognises the Opposition Leader, the Honourable Cole Hedley Simons.
Mr. Simons, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to direct the Premier to page 4. And if he can provide, just a clear definition under clause 5(2)—

Hon. E. David Burt: What? What? Point of information, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I possibly ask the Honourable Member to refer to the actual clause he is referring to?

The Chairman: Yes, he is getting there.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am getting there now.

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay. Sorry.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So it is clause 5(2) under "gaming service," and item (e), "conducting a game, where—(i) the game is played for money or money's worth . . ." Can the Premier provide an expanded definition of what is meant by "money's worth"? That is my first question.

We continue on to "wager" under the same clause [5(2)]; "wager" means, according to context—(a) to make an agreement with one or more persons to pay money or money's worth to one or more other persons on the basis of the result of a game, lottery or other uncertain event . . ." Can he give us an example of the "other uncertain event"? Because I am not clear as to what that might be.

Hon. E. David Burt: Just a point. Which clause is that again? Same, in definitions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, under "wager."

Hon. E. David Burt: "Wager." Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Page 5, [clause 5(2)], "wager," (a). It says—

Hon. E. David Burt: Got it.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You see it? "Other uncertain events."

And then we go down to clause 5(4), "Repeal the definition of 'cashless wagering system' and substitute . . ." On the last phrase it says "and crediting of the patron account." My question there is, Where is the patron account held? And what process do we need to follow to establish the patron account?

I am now moving over to clause 20, page 9, "Repeals and replaces section 121A." And it reads [at proposed new section 121A(1)], "The Commission

may give directions prohibiting a staff member of a casino operator, a class of such staff members, or an immediate member of the family . . .,” et cetera. The question is, Why are we using the word “may,” which is permissive, and not make it mandatory to prohibit staff members from engaging in this activity? I am just suggesting you might examine a “shall” versus “may.” If he can provide an explanation for that.

Now we move on to clause 25, the “Prohibition on offering or engaging in gaming.” This applies to all three [subsections] of [proposed new section] 167A(1), (2) and (3). Am I to believe that online gaming will be prohibited, whether it is local online gaming or whether local residents can participate in online gaming sites in other jurisdictions? It can go both ways. Foreigners do online gaming on Bermuda sites, and Bermudians do online gaming at overseas sites. Are these activities prohibited? Just for clarity for the public’s sake.

Hon. E. David Burt: Which clause?

The Chairman: Clause 25.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Clause 25, [proposed new section] 167A.

Hon. E. David Burt: Section 167A, which number?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Section 167A(1), (2) and (3).

Hon. E. David Burt: One, two and three. Okay. Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: In the same clause, on the next page, “Prohibitions related to possession, sale and supply of gaming machines.” Can the Minister confirm whether it is legal for an operator to bring in equipment or gaming machines if he has a provisional licence? Or does he have to have the final licence before he brings in any machine? I am asking because if we are setting up a hotel gaming casino and the operator wants to have things organised for when the final licence is granted, in being proactive and with the approval of the commission, can he bring in equipment or get his machines based on the provisional licence that he has in his or her possession?

Clause 27, [proposed new Part 12A,] “Exempt Conduct”. “Exempt private wagers.” Can the Minister confirm whether local private poker nights, Crown and Anchor nights, bingo nights and private casino parties are permissible under this [proposed] section?

And those are my comments, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Opposition Leader.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, could I just ask the Honourable Member to repeat the last one again? Because he said “clause 27.”

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Of course.

Clause 27, and then it goes, [proposed] “Part 12A Exempt Conduct.” And you have “Exempt private wagers.” And so I am speaking to that whole [proposed] section [179A]. And my question is, Is it permissible for Bermudian residents to have private poker nights, Crown and Anchor nights, bingo nights and private casino parties? Are those covered in this exemption?

And those are my questions for the first 30 clauses.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier, it is 12:29. Do you want to adjourn us for lunch, and we will return at two o’clock?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sure, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Actually, may I make a comment before we do that? We may be able to wrap this right up, because I only have maybe one other question, and then I would be done with my questions, if you do not mind.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, if it is from a clause that we have not moved, I would not be able to do that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I move that the House do now adjourn for lunch, and we will pick back up at 2:00 pm.

The Chairman: The Committee stands adjourned until two o’clock. And we will see you then. Thank you, Members.

Proceedings in Committee suspended at 12:30 pm

Proceedings in Committee resumed at 2:00 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

GAMING (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) ACT 2021

[Continuation thereof]

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members. Good afternoon, listening audience. We are resuming (after lunch) the debate on the [Gaming \(Transfer of Functions\) Act 2021](#).

Premier, Minister Burt, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to you. I sincerely

hope you had a pleasant lunch break over there in the Hamilton Parish, where I assume that you are.

The Chairman: Hamilton Parish is God's country.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I will save the banter until June, that is my new thing, Mr. Chairman. I am not going to have any banter until June around our holiday.

But I will say, Mr. Chairman, there were a number of questions—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Premier, can you hold on? We have another person who would like to make a contribution on the first section that you just addressed.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, you will have to ask the Chair. So, I will give my responses to the Chair to recognise—

The Chairman: Mr. Simons, you know, you have been in this legislature long enough to know that the seniors—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: He has not moved it—

The Chairman: Yes, but you are still going to have to come through the Chair. You know that.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Oh, absolutely. My humblest apology.

The Chairman: Accepted.
Continue, Mr. Opposition Leader.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Scott.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have further questions on this section, with your leave.

The Chairman: Yes, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Two questions arising from the clauses 3 through 30. The first question arises in respect of clause 9. Clause 9 can be found at page 7 of the Bill.

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: This is an amending Act and the Act that it amends is the Casino Gaming Act 2014, the primary Act. And this is amending section 9 of the primary Act.

Section 9 of the primary Act is important because it relates to the functions and duties of the Casino Commission, or now, the Commission. And my question in relation to clause 9 of the Bill at page 7 is

this: clause 9 is repealing subsection (1) of section 9 of the primary Act, i.e., the section dealing with the functions and the duties of the Commission. And it is replacing it with the language that appears below, where you see (a), (b), and (c)—the three functions of the Commission.

If you look back at the original Act and the original section 9, the functions of the Commission are much . . . they include a lot more things. Just by way of example, they include that it should be a function of the Commission to detect offences committed within the casino premises or in relation to commit to casinos. It should also, by way of example, ensure that the handling, collecting, disbursement or counting of money within the casino premises is supervised. So, there are a number of functions and duties that have now been replaced.

My first question under this clause to the Honourable Premier is whether or not all of those functions and duties that used to be in section 9 of the primary Act, which are now being replaced, are going to be put somewhere else in the gaming legislation. Because I know that there is now a cluster of Bills. And it may well be that this is a question that the Premier wishes the assistance of his legislative team, but are all of those duties and obligations going to be put somewhere else or are they disappearing, simply to be replaced by (a), (b), and (c)?

My second question, also on the same point, is: if they are just to be replaced by [new section] 9(a)(1)(a), which states that "The function of the Commission shall be—(a) to administer the gaming legislation, and perform the functions conferred or imposed on the Commission under the gaming legislation," [and note here] "in a manner that best ensures that the objects of the Commission are achieved". So, if it is just a straight replacement with that language, my second question is this for the Honourable Premier: Does the Honourable Premier understand that to be a broadening of the powers of the Commission or a narrowing of the powers of the Commission or are they just staying the same?

Mr. Chairman, my second and final question in this part relates to clause 25 and it is a similar and slightly more frivolous question, but it was a matter that the Opposition Leader touched on regarding bets, wagers that might happen between individuals. And clause 25 appears at page 10 of the Bill and it says this: "No person in Bermuda shall offer, make, place, receive or accept a wager with another person or persons, whether in person or by use of remote communication." And that language, just taken on its own, would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that were I to make a wager with you as to who might win the Manchester United game or, if you are not a Manchester United or FA fan, who might win an NFL football game in America, that that might lead to a fine, lower down, at \$100,000. And I am sure that is not the intention.

And if we look at clause 27 of the Bill, which is where we see Exempt Conduct, at clause 27, under 179A(a), it says that exempted conduct will include where a “wager is a purely private matter and not conducted as part of any person’s business.”

So, my question there for the Honourable Premier is, can you just give an assurance to the House that we correctly understood that friendly wagers between people in Bermuda on a private basis are not something that will result in any fine and put everyone’s mind at ease?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, those are my questions.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

Mr. Premier, you can continue.

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

Mr. Chairman, let me try to answer the questions which have been asked. The first one is in clause 5(2)(e), the question that was asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who asked about “gaming service” and asked about, under the definition of gaming service, what does “money’s worth” mean? Money’s worth could mean chips or tokens, and the statutory framework is designed to regulate different forms of casino gaming—traditional, cash, chip, token-based gaming or cash gaming. So, that is what “money’s worth” means.

Also, insofar as the definitions, there was a question of what does “other uncertain event” mean in that case? And it refers to any other product or service offered in the expanded gaming sector. Horse racing or football, for example, offered by betting shops—*Crown and Anchor*, et cetera.

In the same thing, “patron accounts” . . . this is regulated by Part 10 of the Casino Gaming Regulations 2018 and gaming accounts can be held by casino operators. In regulation 173, inside of those Regulations, provides the requirements for the establishment of a patron account.

There was a question in regard to clause 20, new section 121A which is trying to be created, which speaks to the question which was asked as to why there was a “may” instead of a “shall.” But the Commission is retaining discretion to issue directives on casino operations in respect of staff and family members to game. Best practice for emerging industries so that circumstances can be addressed on a case by-case basis. The ability to exercise discretion does not in any way imply that where it is best practice to issue a directive, one will not be issued. I trust the Casino Gaming Commission in the execution of their duties, certainly.

There was a question on clause 25 and the question there was asking whether or not it was illegal for a casino operator to bring in equipment and machines if they are the holder of a provisional licence,

or if they have been issued a substantive licence. Well, the answer to that question is that it *is* legal. Regulations permit an application for a casino licence to import, but the importation of gaming equipment is hinged on the equipment supplier as well as particular equipment being approved by the Commission. And that is something that is important for a distinction.

There was a question on 127A, there was a question from the Opposition Leader, and also in the other intervention for other questions from the Shadow . . . sorry, the Member from constituency 22. There were questions on clause 27 about a new part which inserts into there “Exempt Conduct.” There was a question as to whether private poker nights . . . and there was also a question as if I were to win my bet against you, Mr. Chairman, that for the 10th consecutive year Somerset will retain the Cup this year, if I were to win that wager, as to whether or not I would be subject to a \$100,000 fine. And the answer is . . . and the answer to that question is, Mr. Chairman, that friendly wagers and private poker nights, where some Honourable Members will be at a home, are permitted as long as the conditions that are set out in [new] section 179A are met.

I just want to make that clear. So, it lays out here exempt private wagers, and as long as those conditions are met that will not apply. So, it is correct to say that those type of private wagers between individuals are not part of this construct.

There was also a question from the Opposition Leader which asked about proposed sections in clause 25—[do] proposed sections 167A(1), (2) and (3) mean that online gaming is prohibited both for persons in Bermuda and using overseas sites? That is not the intent of this. And the answer is no. The Commission is a statutory organisation and it derives its functions, duties and goals from the power of the legislation.

The current legislative framework does not regulate online Internet gaming or persons at home accessing the Internet and any available online gaming sites and placing bets. The Transfer of Functions Bill does not seek to expand the commission’s remit to include online or Internet gaming. Thus, any of the current proposed sections are not relevant to that activity. The reference to remote communication in the Transfer of Functions Bill, as well as in the principal Act, the Casino Gaming Act, (section 29) relates only to eGaming which is activity limited to a place within a designated site—the resort premises known as the “eGaming zone.” [Therefore,] eGaming could be offered as an amenity on the resort property and it is not associated with the broader activity of online and Internet gaming.

Finally, there was a question in regard to clause 9 . . . I am not entirely certain . . . yes, clause 9, which amends section 9. And the question was whether or not there is a change in the, I guess I would say, scope of the Commission. All former func-

tions are now subsumed under the placement clause. It is a streamlining and broadening to allow for the Commission's functions over other forms of gaming. The specific functions are more particularised under other pieces of gaming legislation. So, I think that helps.

The Chairman: any further questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None from our side, thank you.

The Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Premier, if you want to move clauses 1 through 30.

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

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 30 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 30 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved, clauses 1 through 30.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 30 passed.]

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

Mr. Chairman, I will now move clauses 31 through 55, if I may.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, clause . . .

The Chairman: Thirty-one?

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 31 amends the Companies Act.

Mr. Chairman, forgive me, I am just getting used to these new glasses. I am beginning to age so, you know, I just have to adjust to make sure that I am okay. I am catching you up, Mr. Chairman, I am catching you up!

The Chairman: You are going past me. You are going past me.

[Laughter]

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

Mr. Chairman, clause 31 amends the Companies Act 1981 in the Tenth Schedule to make providing a gaming service, except as authorised by law, a prohibited business activity under that Act.

Clauses 32 through 40 amend the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Act 2013 to transfer responsibility for cruise ship casinos from the Minister responsible for lotteries to the Commission. The amendment to section 7 in clause 37 provides that licence fees will be paid to the Commission rather than to the Consolidated Fund.

Clause 41 amends the Liquor Licence Act 1974 in section 1 in the definition of "unlawful game" so as to transfer responsibility for issuing Crown and Anchor permits from the Commissioner of Police to the Commission.

Clauses 42 through 47 amend the Lotteries Act 1944 to transfer responsibility for lotteries from the secretary to the Cabinet to the commission and make related changes so as to align the Lotteries Act 1944 with the Gaming Act.

Clauses 48 through 50 amend the Casino Gaming Regulations 2018 to enable those regulations to align with various changes made by the Bill to the Gaming Act.

Clause 51 amends regulations made under the Gaming Act to retitle them in alignment with the amendments made by the Bill to the Gaming Act.

Clause 52 repeals the Prohibition of Gaming Machines Act 2001 (now dealt with under Part 12 of the Gaming Act) and provides for the consequential repeal of provisions under the Gaming Act and the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Act 2013 which reference the Prohibition of Gaming Machines Act 2001.

Clause 53 provides for transitional provisions.

Clause 54 makes consequential amendments to several enactments to substitute references to the Casino Gaming Act with the "Gaming Act" and to substitute references to the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission with the "Bermuda Gaming Commission." This clause also repeals regulation 279(1) of the Casino Regulations (as a consequence of clause 16 of the Bill) to remove the ability of the Commission to determine an appeal against a decision of the Commission, revises the duration period of self-exclusion and compulsory exclusion orders (as a consequence of clause 19 of the Bill) and further provides for other minor consequential amendments to be made under Schedule 2. This clause also permits the Minister to make further consequential and related amendments to any provision of any other Act or statutory instrument where it appears to be inconsistent with or requires amendment consequently upon or has become unnecessary in consequence of the provision of this Bill.

Clause 55 provides for commencement by notice published in the *Gazette*.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Any further speakers?

Honourable Opposition Leader Simons.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I just have one comment, Mr. Chairman. And I would like to refer the Premier and yourself to [clause] 54, the last paragraph [subsection (6)], as this is a new industry and an evolving industry, I would have thought the regulations would have been better served if they were under the affirmative resolution. Can the Premier provide his reasoning why he thinks it is best to have the negative resolution for the regulations for this new industry versus the affirmative resolution? Those are my only questions on that section.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Opposition Leader.
Mr. Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: Can the Opposition Leader confirm the clause to which he is referring?

The Chairman: Fifty-four.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [Clause] 54(6), just before the Commencement, page 21. It talks about the negative resolution.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, absolutely. Just so we are aware, this is only for consequential amendments to any of these Acts based upon the intent of this. So, if there was one thing that might, or may, be in this, it is just the changes to any of the regulations of the other Acts. It does not permit there to be substantive changes to the Act, it is just . . . and I think it is very clear. It says, “any other Act or statutory instrument if it appears to him that that provision is inconsistent with, or requires amendment consequentially upon, or has become unnecessary in consequence of, the provisions of this Act.” So, this is specifically referring to the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021. It is not referring to the Casino Gaming Act in its entirety.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further questions?
There appear to be none.

Hon. E. David Burt: And the only thing else I would say is that as industry moves quickly it is very important that there are any . . . that we are able to be flexible. So, we do not want . . . we certainly do not want anything to be missed.

The Chairman: Any further questions?
There appear to be none.
Premier, Minister, do you want to move clauses 31 through 55?

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

Mr. Chairman, I ask that we move clauses 31 through . . . sorry. I move that clauses 31 through 55 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 31 through 55 be approved as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 31 through 55, as printed, have been approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 31 through 55 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I move that Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, MP Pearman, I had a question on Schedule 2, please.

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable Premier, Schedule 2 to the Bill appears at page 24. [Paragraph] 1 of Schedule 2 proposes to remove the Casino Gaming (Regulations) 2018 from the Second Schedule of the [Statutory Instruments Act 1977](#). I am just curious why it is being removed from that Schedule and, additionally, why it was put in that Schedule to begin with. I note that the Second Schedule to that Act—the 1977 Act—relates to the publication or otherwise of regulations and it requires an express decision by the Premier. So, perhaps that is something you could assist us with.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: Stand by. I will happily get an answer for the Honourable Member.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Listening audience, we are just waiting on a reply. We should be . . . stay tuned with us.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, stand by one second. I am actually pulling up the Statutory Instruments Act as I speak.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is interesting to note, Mr. Chairman, that the only Act that is actually listed in the

Second Schedule of the Statutory Instruments Act [1977] is this Bill.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. What I will do, Mr. Chairman, as I have been advised that I will have to revert for an answer, but what I can also state for the . . . yes, the answer is that regulations were very long to publish in the newspaper. Now we have *e-Gazette* publications, so it is not a problem.

So, the Schedule 2 was placed in there to allow for matters to be published electronically and not necessarily to be published in a newspaper. And so that is the reason why that Schedule 2 was added into the Statutory Instruments Act [1977] and that is the reason why the Casino Gaming Regulations were there, because they were very, very, very, very long. So, that is the reason why that was inserted by the former Government.

Now that we have the *e-Gazette* on a universal basis, there is no need for that specific provision to apply, and that is the reason why it has been removed from the Schedule 2. Eventually there may be a need to just take that provision out of the Statutory Instruments Act 1977 so that allows for Schedule 2, but that is why it was inserted into the Statutory Instruments Act [1977], just for this particular Act because the regulations are incredibly long. If they were printed in the newspaper, it might be longer than the newspaper actually is on a daily basis.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, are you—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful, Mr. Chairman, for the Premier's answer.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay.

Continue, Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

With that I move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Schedules 1 and 2 are approved.

[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]

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

I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The preamble has been approved.

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

Mr. 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 appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: I call on the Speaker.

House resumed at 2:26 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

GAMING (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) ACT 2021

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported as printed. That closes that item.

We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper today, which is the second reading of the Betting Act 2021, again, in the name of the Premier.

Mr. Premier, would you like to present your matter now?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sure, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you and good afternoon to you.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. E. David Burt: I sincerely hope that you enjoyed your lunch.

The Speaker: I am still here.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Betting Act 2021 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a second time?

There are none. Continue, Premier.

BILL

SECOND READING

BETTING ACT 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, it often seems that in jurisdictions like Bermuda we are in a constant state of meeting international obligations to safeguard our core industries. This is necessary work that is a part and parcel of being a leading financial centre. The Bill before this Honourable House provides for a completely separate regulatory regime for the betting sector.

Mr. Speaker, the original Betting Act dates from 1975 and must be amended to meet the changes in national and global circumstances. This Bill will repeal and replace the 1975 Act, thereby ensuring that the regulation in this industry is commensurate with international best practice, embracing standards of due diligence and anti-money laundering.

Mr. Speaker, these modernisation efforts are beneficial for Bermuda, demonstrating to an increasingly aggressive international audience our commitment for a first-rate regulatory framework at all levels.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there were questions in the last debate asking about the international obligations and this Bill is certainly addressing that.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed statutory provisions cover certain key areas. First, there are provisions required for the Commission to perform its core function and duty to regulate and supervise compliance, including enforcement. Second, provisions to discharge the statutory goals that games should be fair and honest, conducted with a high level of integrity, including through the approval of betting equipment and betting rules. Third, provisions to mitigate identified money-laundering and terrorist financing risks associated with the sector. These include: tracking transactions, keeping a registry of patrons, and keeping statements of accounts.

Fourth, provisions to promote responsible gaming, including the exclusion of minors from premises, requiring proof of age, and a prohibition on the service and consumption of alcohol on betting premises.

And five, provisions which are features of a fair and modern regime, including dispute resolution and rights of appeal against certain decisions of the regulator.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to this Honourable House on the tabling of this Bill, it has been developed after wide-ranging consultation with local stakeholders, including all relevant agencies in the anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing framework and with current betting operators.

Mr. Speaker, the process of change to a sector in this regard must be appropriately managed and I can advise this Honourable House that those licences issued by the Betting Authority for the period of 1 April 2021 through the 31 March 2022 remain in force allowing the Legislature's enactment of these reforms.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, a phased approach has been adapted to the implementation of the various measures. While some will come into force immediately, others will not take effect for six months to allow operators time to adjust.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will be supported by regulations, which are subject to the affirmative resolution procedure and will, therefore, be made following the passage of this Bill in the Legislature. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House and the public that there will be no increase of fees for the renewal of licences, while new entrants to the market will be required to pay a fee of \$2,500.

Mr. Speaker, growth and development is inevitably accompanied by change. The change that is proposed by this Bill will accrue to the benefit of the sector and, more widely, Bermuda in the meeting of our international obligations with our international tests for anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing. I am, therefore, pleased to commend this Bill for the consideration of this Honourable House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will be very, very brief.

First of all, I would like to start by stating that I found the legislation very, very palatable and very easy to read. So, I would like to commend the legislative draft persons for a job well done.

In regard to the AML and ATF global protocols and their recent NAMLC review, I am comfortable in regard to the legislation in that it covers the concerns that were raised in the review. And so, basically, I am very supportive of the legislation.

The other issue that I would like . . . I am delighted to see that, as the Premier said, in this section the regulations are affirmative resolution and there will be no increase in fees.

So, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister for the legislation and we on the Opposition side support the legislation as presented.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There are none.

Premier.

Mr. Premier, we can see you but we cannot hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: You know, this is 2021, you would have figured we would have learned how to unmute every single time, right?

The Speaker: Well—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: —I thought you had an IT background. Was that correct?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, IT background does not work when you have a lack of sleep, I promise you.

The Speaker: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Opposition Leader for his comments, and I am certain that the legislative drafters who are listening do and will appreciate the comments which he has made. It is really . . . it is really difficult work in constantly keeping up with the international obligations. And in this Bill we tried to make sure that we meet the international obligations while not putting too heavy-handed of a regulatory burden on our local operators here in Bermuda as they certainly are competing with a global audience.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now committed.

The Speaker: Members, I call on the Deputy Speaker to take us into Committee.

Deputy Speaker?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:33 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BETTING ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Betting Act 2021](#).

Premier, Minister Burt, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of clauses in this Bill, actually, 101 of those clauses. And as is our legislative process, I will read them through.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 8.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 sets out definitions used in the Bill.

Clause 3 provides that nothing in the Lotteries Act 1944 renders unlawful the business of receiving or negotiating bets by a betting operator.

Clause 4 provides that nothing in the Bill renders unlawful the business . . . sorry. .

Clause 5 makes it an offence to act as a bookmaker or pool betting agent without a betting licence, or for a person to receive or negotiate bets as the staff member of a person carrying on the business of a bookmaker or pool betting agent without a betting licence. The offence is punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding six months, or to both (referred to in this Explanatory Memorandum as “the standard penalty”), plus a daily penalty of \$500.

Clause 6 makes it an offence to send pool coupons outside Bermuda without a pool betting licence. The offence is punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 7 defines “associate” for the purposes of the Bill.

Clause 8 provides that the fact that a contract relates to betting with a betting operator shall not prevent its enforcement.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Any further speakers?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

No further speakers.

Mr. Premier, would you like to move clauses 1 through 8?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. I would move that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 1 through 8 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 8 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move the next part of the Bill, which are clauses 9 through 20.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Clause 9 empowers the Commission to grant an applicant a “bookmaker’s licence” for a single specified premises. This allows the holder of the licence, in accordance with the Bill and with the terms and conditions of the licence, to provide a bookmaker service to patrons on the premises and, subject to clause 21, to provide the approved bookmaker service to patrons on event premises in accordance with an event permit.

Clause 10 empowers the Commission to grant an applicant a “restricted bookmaker’s licence” in relation to a single specified premises. This allows the holder of the licence, in accordance with the Bill and with the terms and conditions of the licence, to provide a bookmaker service to patrons on the premises restricted to fixed odds betting on the results of a football match or cricket match.

Clause 11 empowers the Commission to grant an applicant a “pool betting agent’s licence” in relation to a single specified premises. This allows the holder of the licence, in accordance with the Bill and with the terms and conditions of the licence, to receive or negotiate pool bets with patrons and effect any transaction of pool betting, where the promoter of the pool betting is based outside Bermuda.

Clause 12 requires an application for grant or renewal of a betting licence to be made to the Commission by the person who will be responsible for providing the betting activities on the premises and will supervise and manage those activities. Where that person is not the owner of the premises, the approval of the owner is also required. By submitting an application for a betting licence, the applicant consents to an investigation. The Commission must gazette the notice of application, and the following persons are entitled to object to the grant of a licence in relation to particular premises: the Commissioner of Police; the Corporations of Hamilton and St George’s where the premises are in the municipal area; the owner or occupier of any property situated within 300 metres of the premises; and any person ordinarily resident in the relevant parish.

Clause 13 provides that the application fee for a new licence and for renewal of a licence shall be as prescribed, and sets out requirement relating to the timing of licence applications.

Clause 14 requires the Commission, before granting a betting licence, to be satisfied as to: the suitability of the applicant and any associates; the adequacy of the corporate structure if the operation will be conducted by a company; that there are adequate financial resources to ensure the financial viability of

the proposed betting operation; and that the applicant has sufficient business experience and ability to establish and maintain a successful betting operation.

Clause 15 requires the Commission, before granting a betting licence, to assess: the effect on the public welfare; the suitability of the premises and the location; and any objections lodged with the Commission and the extent to which they can be satisfactorily dealt with by limitations or conditions on the licence.

Clause 16 requires the Commission to provide a copy of every application to the Commissioner of Police, and to carry out all such investigations and inquiries as it considers necessary to enable it to consider the application properly. This may include public meetings and the receipt of evidence under oath, and investigations by third parties resulting in the provision of information or documentation to the Commission.

Clause 17 empowers the Commission to require an applicant for a betting licence or a relevant associate to provide further information, and if it is not provided the Commission may refuse to consider the application.

Clause 18 requires an applicant to update any information given in an application before the grant or refusal of the licence. Failure to do so is an offence punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding \$10,000.

Clause 19 sets out the procedure for the grant or refusal of a betting licence, and provides that a licence may be granted subject to such conditions as the Commission thinks sees fit.

Clause 20 provides for an annual fee for a betting licence.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any further speakers on clauses 9 through 20?

There appear to be none. Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 9 through 20?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 9 through 20 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 9 through 20 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 9 through 20 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 9 through 20 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move the next part, which is clauses 22 through 27.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am sorry, 21 through 27.

Clause 21 is a regulation-making power to prescribe the circumstances in which the Commission

may, on application by the holder of a bookmaker's licence grant an "event permit" relating to specified event premises (including any ship or boat, et cetera), allowing approved bookmaker services for a specified period of up to 72 hours subject to specified conditions.

Clause 22 provides for regulations to prescribe the standard conditions that will apply to all betting licences of a specified class, subject to modification by the Commission for a particular licence following its investigation and assessment.

Clause 23 provides for amendments of the conditions of a betting licence, or the boundaries of the premises to which it applies.

Clause 24 prohibits the holder of a betting licence from mortgaging, charging or otherwise encumbering it, except with the prior approval in writing of the Commission. It also prohibits the transfer of a betting licence except by way of application for a new licence.

Clause 25 specifies that it is a condition of a bookmaker's licence, a restricted bookmaker's licence and a pool betting agent's licence that the holder must lodge with the Commission an acceptable guarantee in the statutory amount for the due performance of the licence holder's obligations. The clause also sets out what is an acceptable guarantee, provides for a guarantee to be replaced in certain circumstances, and clarifies that a guarantee is enforceable at law notwithstanding that the obligations in respect of which the security is given arise from gaming transactions. The statutory amount is \$100,000 which can be amended by order. This amount can be provided only by one guarantee of the full amount or two guarantees of equal amounts of \$50,000.

Clause 26 prohibits the Commission from granting a betting licence to a person who already holds a betting licence or a casino licence (under the Gaming Act 2014), except in the specified circumstances.

Clause 27 allows the holder of a betting licence to surrender it by giving notice in writing to the Commission; such surrender will take effect on the date agreed by the Commission.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Are there any speakers to clauses 21 through 27?

There appear to be none. Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 21 through 27?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Chairman, yes.

The Chairman: I am sorry, Opposition Leader Simons.

Continue.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to direct the Premier to clause 24 "Encumbrance or transfer of a betting licence."

So, just for the public's clarity, are we saying that the licence cannot be used—

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry, point of information. You said clause . . .

The Chairman: Twenty-four.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Clause 24.

Hon. E. David Burt: Got it. Apologies. I went to page 24 so I was a little bit lost. Clause 24, go ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, "Encumbrance." So, are we saying that the holder of a betting licence cannot use that licence as collateral for any loan unless approved by the Commission? I just want to be sure.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm. That is my reading of that clause.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. The second one is . . . I take you to "Guarantees" and [subsection] (7) under Guarantees, the \$100,000 guarantee. Does the Commission require—

The Chairman: Clause 25(7)?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Clause 25(7). Yes, that is correct.

The Chairman: Yes, right.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Does the commissioner require collateral to be held for the guarantee? And if collateral is required for the guarantee, does the commissioner hold that collateral?

And those are my two questions, thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, can I reply?

The Chairman: Yes, please.

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

Mr. Chairman, [clause] 25 in regard to the guarantees, I think that it sets out clearly all the various things which are acceptable for a guarantee. And so, the guarantee has to be issued by an institution, equal shares, et cetera, so I am not entirely certain that the Commission is the one that his holding any form of collateral, et cetera. The guarantee has to be set up and issued under the provisions of the previous clauses . . . I am sorry, of the conditions that are in that particular section of the new Act.

The Chairman: Any further questions?

No further questions?
Premier, do you want to move—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I move that clauses 21 through 27 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 21 through 27 be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Clauses 21 through 27 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 21 through 27 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will say before I move on to the next clauses, for the edification of the Honourable Opposition Leader, there is no change in policy from the back Act in 1975 in regard to the guarantee provisions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I will ask that because Part 4 is incredibly lengthy I will split it into two parts. And I will ask to move clauses 28 through 47.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 28 requires a betting operator to establish, document and implement a system of internal controls designed to ensure that the betting operator complies with the requirements of the Bill, and any applicable regulations and directions.

Clause 29 requires a betting operator to maintain currency transaction reports for anti-money laundering purposes if a patron provides to or removes from the betting premises an amount of \$1,000 or more, whether in a single transaction or a series of related transactions over a 24-hour period. Such reports are to be disclosed to the Financial Intelligence Agency.

Clause 30 requires a betting operator to keep accounting records that correctly record and explain the transactions and financial position of the operations of the betting operation, and which will enable true and fair financial statements and accounts to be prepared from time to time and the financial statements and accounts to be properly audited.

Clause 31 requires a betting operator to prepare financial statements and accounts not later than three months after the end of its financial year.

Clause 32 requires a betting operator to keep all records relating to the betting operation in an approved manner for not less than seven years, or such

shorter period as the Commission may allow, and to make such records available for inspection.

Clause 33 requires a betting operator to keep and maintain accounts, as approved by the Commission, at a licensed deposit-taking business for use for all banking transactions relating to the betting operator.

Clause 34 requires a betting operator to conduct betting operations in accordance with a set of betting rules approved by the Commission for use by the betting operator. The Commission may publish the approved rules on its official website.

Clause 35 prohibits a betting operator from using relevant equipment in relation to betting unless it is approved by the Commission.

Clause 36 requires a betting operator to display a notice informing patrons where a copy of the approved rules for betting may be inspected, and to display the advice or information concerning those rules, the mode of payment of winning wagers and the pay-out odds of each winning wager.

Clause 37 provides for a betting operator to establish a register of patrons whose identity has been verified by the betting operator. The betting operator shall not register a person unless he appears in person at the betting premises, and the betting operator is satisfied as to the identity of the person (established by photographic ID) and is satisfied that the person is not a minor or an excluded person. The clause sets out circumstances in which a betting operator must remove a patron from the register. Failure to comply with this section is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 38 prohibits a betting operator from accepting a significant bet from a person other than a registered patron. "Significant bet" is defined as a bet or series of linked bets by a patron in which the patron's possible winnings is \$1,000 or more. Failure to comply with this section is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 39 allows a betting operator to provide a registered patron who is resident in Bermuda with a customer account held to the credit of the patron for the purposes of betting with the betting operator.

Clause 40 requires a customer account to be operated in the prescribed manner.

Clause 41 prohibits a betting operator from accepting a wager made otherwise than by means of money, from lending or extending any form of credit, and from providing a facility for a patron to pay for bets in advance other than by means of a customer account for registered patrons.

Clause 42 prohibits a betting operator from providing or allowing an automatic teller machine within the boundaries of the betting premises.

Clause 43 sets out the procedure when a betting operator has decided to permanently cease operations of the entire business authorised by its licence, whether by sale of the business or otherwise. Subsec-

tion (3) (payment of sums, financial report, et cetera) also applies when a licence is suspended or revoked.

Clause 44 prohibits a betting operator from selling, serving, or allowing a person to consume intoxicating liquor on the betting premises. Failure to comply with this section is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 45 allows a betting operator, or his staff member, to refuse to admit to, or to expel from, the betting premises any person who appears to be intoxicated by alcohol or a drug, or who is acting in a disorderly manner or whose presence on the betting premises would subject the operator to a statutory penalty. If a person fails to leave when requested, he commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to the standard penalty. A police officer may use such force as may be required to help to expel such a person from the betting premises.

Clause 46 requires a betting operator to take all appropriate steps to ensure that certain acts are not committed by its staff members, patrons or other persons within the betting premises including: illegal gaming, unlicensed moneylending, drunken, disorderly or riotous behaviour, drug offences, soliciting, serious arrestable offences, or any behaviour likely to bring the betting operator, the Commission or Bermuda into disrepute.

Clause 47 provides for regulations to prohibit a staff member of a betting operator, a class of such staff members, or a prescribed member of the family of such a staff member, from betting with the betting operator.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Are there any further speakers?
Questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None from this side.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 48 to—28 through 47?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I move that clauses 28 through 47 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 28 through 47 be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Clauses 28 through 47 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 28 through 47 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I would like to now move the second part of Part 4, which would be clauses 48 through 70.

The Chairman: Continue.

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

Clause 48 defines “acceptable proof of age” for purposes of Chapter 4 (clauses 48 through 55). “Minor” is defined in clause 2 to mean a person who is under 18 years of age.

Clause 49 makes it an offence for a minor to enter or remain on betting premises or take part in betting remotely with a betting operator.

Clause 50 provides that a betting operator shall not permit a minor to enter or remain on a betting premise and requires a betting operator to immediately remove any minor from betting premises using no more force than is reasonably necessary. It is a defence to disciplinary action under this clause if the betting operator took all reasonable steps, including requiring production of valid documentary proof of age, in order to determine the person’s age and reasonably believed the person was not a minor.

Clause 51 provides that if a betting operator or a staff member is aware that a person who appears to be a minor is attempting to enter the betting premises, he must refuse the person entry unless acceptable proof of age is produced.

Clause 52 provides for proof of age where a person who appears to be a minor is on a betting premises. Failure to comply is an offence.

Clause 53 creates an offence if a minor uses any false evidence purporting to be evidence of his age in order to obtain entry to or remain on a betting premises.

Clause 54 provides that the Commission may, by written direction given to a betting operator, require notices to be displayed within the betting premises with respect to the exclusion of persons under the age of 18 years.

Clause 55 provides a penalty of a fine not exceeding \$10,000 for offences under Chapter 4, but any minor committing an offence will be dealt with in accordance with the Young Offenders Act 1950.

Clause 56 provides that a person enters and remains on any betting premises only by the licence of the betting operator, and may be refused entry unless he shows valid documentary evidence confirming his age.

Clause 57 empowers a police officer to enter betting premises, as provided.

Clause 58 provides for regulations to govern the procedure for making, varying and revoking exclusion orders relating to the whole or part of betting premises. Regulations may make provision for the application of Part 10 of the Gaming Act 2014 (Problem Gaming Council and family exclusion orders) to betting.

Clause 59 relates to self-exclusion orders made by a betting operator or the Commission at the request of a person.

Clause 60 relates to compulsory-exclusion orders made by a betting operator or the Commission.

Clause 61 provides that exclusion orders may be made for an indefinite duration but may not be made for a period of less than six months.

Clause 62 empowers the Commission to make an order affirming, varying or revoking an exclusion order at any time of its own volition or on an application by the betting operator or the excluded person.

Clause 63 provides for the maintenance of lists of excluded persons by betting operators and by the Commission. Such information is to be treated as confidential and disclosed only for the purposes of the Bill; unlawful disclosure is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 64 prohibits excluded persons from entering betting premises to which the exclusion order applies or taking part in betting with a betting operator to which the exclusion order applies. Failure to comply by a person subject to a compulsory exclusion order is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 65 provides that a betting operator shall not, without reasonable excuse, permit an excluded person to enter or remain on the betting premises or take part in betting.

Clause 66 requires a person in charge of betting premises or an authorised staff member to notify an inspector and provide reasonable assistance to the inspector if an excluded person is about to enter or is on betting premises.

Clause 67 sets out the procedure where a betting operator and patron are unable to resolve a dispute about alleged winnings or losses, or the manner in which betting is conducted. If the amount in dispute is not less than \$500 an inspector must be notified, and shall conduct such investigations as he thinks necessary to determine whether payment should be made.

Clause 68 allows any party aggrieved by the decision of an inspector to apply to the Commission for review, and the Commission may confirm, vary or reverse the inspector's decision and notify the parties in writing.

Clause 69 requires payment within 30 days of the inspector's or Commission's decision, or the decision of the Magistrates' Court following an appeal.

Clause 70 allows a person aggrieved by a decision made against him by the commission to appeal to the Magistrates' Court.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier. (I am just trying to get back on, I do not know what is happening here. Oh boy, how does this thing go? Ah!)

Any further speakers to clauses 48 through 70?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Not on this side, sir.

The Chairman: Nothing? Okay.

Premier, do you want to move clauses 48 through 70?

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

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 48 through 70 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 48 through 70 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 48 through 70 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 48 through 70 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue, Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 71 through 80 in Part 5 . . . I would like to move clauses 71 through 80.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Clause 71 empowers the Commission to give a betting operator a written direction that relates to the conduct, supervision or control of betting operations, and requires the betting operator to comply with the direction.

Clause 72 requires a betting operator or associate to provide information to the Commission when required to do so by notice in writing. Failure to comply is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 73 makes provision relating to approval of the Commission and requiring notification when there is a major or minor change (as defined) in the situation of a betting operator.

Clause 74 requires a betting operator to notify the Commission when there is a change in the situation in relation to an associate of the operator.

Clause 75 relates to the ongoing monitoring of associates by the Commission.

Clause 76 empowers an inspector to enter and remain on any betting premises for the purposes of exercising his functions under the Bill, on provision of his identification card.

Clause 77 sets out the powers of inspectors.

Clause 78 authorises an inspector to administer oaths and require information to be provided on oath.

Clause 79 authorises an inspector who is exercising a power of entry under clause 76 to require a person to state his full name and residential address if he suspects on reasonable grounds that an offence has been or is being committed. If a person refuses to comply, or gives information which the inspector be-

lieves is false, the inspector may detain the person and must notify the police. Failure to comply with an inspector's requirement is an offence punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 80 empowers an inspector to seize and retain for a period not exceeding 30 days any article or thing relating to betting, the use or possession of which is unlawful, and sets out the procedure for application to court for forfeiture.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Are there any speakers to clauses 71 through 80?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [Clause] 78, "Inspector may require information on oath." Can the Premier give us an example when an inspector will be required to administer an oath?

The Chairman: Mr. Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: One second, Mr. Chairman, let me try and get to that.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is page 39, clause 78, at the top.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I think it is in subsection (2) of that, it says, "An inspector may require any information submitted pursuant to this Act to be provided on oath." So, if someone had to provide a financial statement, a statement of account, a statement of something that would have happened, it says the "inspector may require any information submitted pursuant to this Act to be provided on oath."

The Chairman: Anything further, Opposition Leader Simons?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You can proceed. I am not 100 per cent clear, but I will talk to my legal beavers.

The Chairman: Okay.

[Laughter]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You may proceed.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 71 through 80?

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

I move that clauses 71 through 80 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 71 through 80 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 71 through 80 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 71 through 80 passed.]

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

I will move for Parts 6 and 7. So, I will move clauses 81 through 95.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 81 sets out the procedure for the Commission to take appropriate disciplinary action as specified against a betting operator. Disciplinary action includes a letter of censure, variation of licence conditions, a financial penalty, and suspension or revocation of a betting licence.

Clause 82 sets out the grounds for disciplinary action which include any failure to comply with the Bill, regulations, licence conditions, internal controls or a direction by the Commission.

Clause 83 allows the Commission to suspend a betting licence where it has been informed of circumstances that could make it appropriate for disciplinary action to be commenced against a betting operator, and the Commission reasonably believes that it is necessary and proportionate to suspend the betting licence in order to prevent any threat to the security of the public or of betting in Bermuda.

Clause 84 sets a limit of \$10,000 for a financial penalty imposed by the Commission for each ground of disciplinary action proved against a betting operator.

Clause 85 is a regulation-making power for the procedure to be followed for disciplinary action against a betting operator.

Clause 86 provides that the holder of a betting licence who is aggrieved by any decision regarding the licence, and a person whose application for a betting licence is refused under clause 19, may appeal that decision to the Magistrates' Court.

Clause 87 creates offences of cheating at betting, punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty. It also includes powers of search of a person if a police officer or an inspector believes on reasonable grounds that the person has committed an offence.

Clause 88 creates an offence of impersonating an inspector, punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 89 creates an offence of entering betting premises on false pretences, or using false ID, punishable on summary conviction with the standard penalty.

Clause 90 creates an offence of refusing to produce equipment for inspection and failing to provide information, punishable on summary conviction

with a fine not exceeding \$50,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both.

Clause 91 creates an offence of destroying or falsifying documents, punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding \$50,000 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years, or both.

Clause 92 creates an offence of providing false or misleading information, punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding \$50,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both.

Clause 93 creates an offence of obstructing an officer of the Commission or an inspector in the discharge of his duties under the Bill, punishable on summary conviction with a fine not exceeding \$50,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both.

Clause 94 provides that summary proceedings for an offence under the Bill may be commenced within three years of the commission of the offence.

Clause 95 is a standard provision relating to offences by bodies corporate.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Are there any speakers to clauses 81 through 95?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You may proceed.

The Chairman: Thank you. Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 81 through 95?

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

I move that clauses 81 through 95 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 81 through 95 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 81 through 95 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 81 through 95 passed.]

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

I would like to move clauses 96 through 101.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

Clause 96 is a general regulation-making power. It provides for regulations and orders made under the Bill by the Minister to be made subject to the negative resolution procedure, except for regulations prescribing fees which are to be made subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

Clause 97 enables the Commission to issue codes, standards of performance or specifications

applicable to betting operations, and provides that the codes may set out conditions to attach to licences.

Clause 98 provides for the consequential amendments set out in the Schedule to have effect.

Clause 99 repeals the Betting Act 1975 and revokes the Betting (Amount of Guarantee) Regulations 1975.

Clause 100 makes transitional provision.

Clause 101 provides for commencement.

The Chairman: Are there any speakers to clauses 96 through 101?

Opposition Leader, none?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You may proceed.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Opposition Leader Simons.

Mr. Premier, do you want to move clauses 96 through 101?

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

I move that clauses 96 through 101 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 96 through 101 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 96 through 101 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 96 through 101 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue, Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Chairman, there is a minor Schedule, which just contains some consequential amendments. I move that the Schedule be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Schedule be approved. Are there any objections to that?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None at all, thank you.

The Chairman: There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Schedule passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. 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 appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Betting Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Thank you, Opposition Leader Cole Simons.

Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:10 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BETTING ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Betting Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported and received.

That now brings that matter to a close and we move on to our next item. Mr. Premier, it looks like you again, I believe.

This time, Members, it is consideration of Betting Fees Regulations 2021.

Mr. Premier.

DRAFT REGULATIONS

BETTING FEES REGULATIONS 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be given to the Draft Regulations entitled the [Betting Fees Regulations 2021](#) proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for gaming in exercise of the power conferred by section 96 of the Betting Act 2021.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

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

Mr. Speaker, section 96 of the Betting Act 2021 now being approved in this Honourable House confers the power to make regulations on the Minister

responsible for gaming. The Betting Fees Regulations 2021 are proposed to be made pursuant to that section and are now before this Honourable House. These regulations provide the framework for the recovery of costs of the Commission in performing any service or conducting any investigation in support of the grant or renewal of any licence proposed to be granted or renewed under the principal Act.

Honourable Members will note that the regulations permit the Commission to recover costs incurred via third party or travel costs as required in the conduct of any investigation. The regime prescribed by the regulations is a transparent one, which requires the Commission to set out the costs incurred and to recover or refund such amounts not covered by any deposit paid by an applicant.

Mr. Speaker, there are standard clauses to protect the Commission and the applicant in the collection of fees, giving the Commission the ability to take into consideration the subjective aspects of any instance of non-payment.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House during the debate on the principal Act, the licence renewal fee for those current licence holders is unchanged. The fees set out include a \$2,500 new entrant sum that is bundled into the fee structure. This is seen in the Schedule of Fees at items 1 and 9. Recognising the administrative requirements, the Fee Schedule also adds a late application fee, a new event permit fee, as well as a new boundary change application fee that would involve a physical inspection of premises for compliance.

Mr. Speaker, this fee structure matches the modernised Act in the suite of services now to be provided by the Commission in support of the betting industry and I commend them for the approval of this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will be very, very brief. The Opposition has reviewed the regulations and are supportive of them. So, we have nothing further to add at this point.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, with that I move that the said Draft Regulations be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

No objections.

The said document will be sent to the Governor. That brings that matter to a close.

[Motion carried: Draft Regulations entitled Betting Fees Regulations 2021 were considered by the House and approved.]

The Speaker: We are now moving on to the [Order] No. 4, which is the second and third reading of the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Attorney General.

Madam Attorney General?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

LIQUOR LICENCE (FEE REDUCTION) TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in this Honourable House for debate the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Members are aware of the global devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world which reached our shores just over one year ago in March 2020.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda, like everywhere else, has been contending with the multiple challenges posed by having to close our Island in varying degrees to prevent the spread of this frightful virus. The challenge of mitigating the need to implement measures restricting our movements, versus the need to promote stimulation to the economy in such adverse circumstances has been met with mixed responses.

Mr. Speaker, the economic toll of the pandemic is far-reaching and has impacted every family, institution and business in Bermuda. Our hospitality industry, one of the pillars of our economy, has been particularly hard hit. One of the mainstays of that sector, including restaurants, is the serving of alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may recall the Liquor Licence Amendment Act 2019, which was enacted to substantially modernise the liquor licensing regime. That legislative exercise was a testament to

this government's efforts to bolster the sector. The reforms ranged from restructuring the Liquor Licensing Authority to creating new types of permits and licences and updating fees and fines for the liquor licensing regime. We have been experiencing success as a result of those changes. This more efficient licensing regime has resulted in more expeditious processing of applications and greater opportunity to obtain licences. Then along came the 2020 pandemic, which altered every economic infrastructure on the Island.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, bars and restaurants are some of our most common intimate public gathering spaces. As such, they are particularly predisposed as places where persons may be likely to unwittingly transmit the virus. Therefore, Government's efforts to contain the spread of the virus included a focus on imposing necessary restrictions upon these licensed premises.

Mr. Speaker, this entails not only varying degrees of restrictions on hours of operation, but also limitations on the number of persons who are permitted in the licensed premises at any given time. As is to be expected, these measures affect not only the profits of bar and restaurant owners, but also the number of hours of work for their employees. The obvious outcome, Mr. Speaker, is that the COVID-19 virus, and not market forces, became the dominant factor as to the bottom line of these businesses. Unfortunately, we recently experienced an upward trend in the number of active cases, resulting in a return to measures that previously proved to be effective at curbing those numbers and preventing proliferation of the spread of the virus. This, unfortunately, has resulted in another vicious blow to an already battered hospitality industry.

Mr. Speaker, the measures in this Bill are essentially straightforward as to their policy objective. They reflect the priority placed on ensuring that local businesses are given a fighting chance to weather the storm of this pandemic. They also reflect this government's responsiveness to concerns of workers and customers towards economic recovery.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, to achieve the foregoing, the Bill amends the Liquor Licensing Act for the reduction by one-half of the liquor licence fee for: a Licence (B), a Hotel Licence, a Restaurant Licence, a Night Club Licence, a Proprietary Club Licence, a Members' Club Licence and a Tour Boat Licence. Further, provision is made for the Bill to expire after a one-year period from the day it comes into operation. It also gives the Minister responsible for liquor licensing the power to make an order before the expiration of the Bill, subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, to extend the Bill for an additional period should an extension be necessary.

Mr. Speaker, it is anticipated that these measures presented in the Bill will contribute to the revitalisation of Bermuda's economy. They also pre-

suppose that, if necessary, they could be augmented as stated or prolonged. Either way, it is anticipated that they will be welcomed by the business community and ultimately by the public for the overall impact they will have on the viability of this sector.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I take this opportunity to acknowledge the members of the Liquor Licensing Authority for their tireless work to ensure the viability of our liquor licensing regime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Attorney General.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Honourable and Learned Attorney General for her presentation this afternoon in respect of the Liquor Licensing (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021. I declare my interest. I am an investor in a small restaurant which had a liquor licence. I say “had” in the past tense because, unfortunately, like so many of our businesses, it is currently closed.

For the benefit of the listening audience, the Learned Attorney General invited the Opposition to deal with this Bill altogether today in three readings. What that means is, rather than subjecting the legislation to careful scrutiny, to discussion, to consultation, we have agreed with the Government’s suggestion that it all happen today, all in one go. One might ask why. The answer to why is because Bermuda is struggling and Bermuda’s economy is struggling. And we—the Opposition—wish to support the Government and, indeed, we will support any sound ideas to get Bermuda’s economy going and to get Bermudian workers back on their feet.

And so, while we would normally resist—and, indeed, any sensible Opposition would resist—allowing a Bill to go through Parliament so quickly, we are doing this because we do support the Bill. And we support it because it will give relief—albeit small relief, but relief nonetheless—to those who often will have closed premises or premises that have been closing and opening and closing and opening with each set of regulations, who have had to potentially lay-off or furlough workers who have had, hopefully, continued health insurance payments for those workers. So, it is not a pretty sight. And, therefore, we do support and I was pleased to support the Attorney General’s request that this be dealt with expeditiously all in one day.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill illustrates the reality of the situation on the ground, which is that we must get

safely back to work. There has been a lot of discussion about a fiscal cliff. I still do not understand why it is people talk about a fiscal cliff that we are about to go over. In my view, we went over the fiscal cliff a long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the Bill itself, as I said, the Opposition is pleased to support this Bill. I would just like to talk about the Bill a little bit. It is not a long Bill at all and, in effect, what it does is reduce the annual licences for various businesses that need to apply for a liquor licence by one-half, by 50 per cent. So, for example, the Bill deals with Hotel Licences, Restaurant Licences, Night Club Licences, Proprietary Club Licences, et cetera. I would observe, and I would invite the Attorney General to consider this should she wish, whether this Bill should go further. Because what it does not do at the moment is reduce the licences for retail premises. By retail premises I mean those who hold a Licence (A), as provided for by the primary Act, the Liquor Licence Act and that would include premises that do takeaway sales. By way of example . . . and I may not be correct in every example, but something like gas stations, liquor stores, wine shops, corner shops, and the likes.

And so, we would invite the Attorney General to consider whether or not A-class licences should also be included in the reduction. Nonetheless, we are very pleased to see the reductions that are being provided under the Licence (B) categories, as I say, for hotels, restaurants, et cetera.

In addition, it is pleasing to see that our tour boat operators—our local Bermudian tour boat operators—are going to have a reduction of 50 per cent to their licences. It was extremely unfortunate how that particular industry and industry segment has been hit. And I know that many among them were very sad that they were not able to get out and make a living during the SaleGP period. So, hopefully, this will come as a small silver lining to them, although it is really perhaps negligible.

So, with the specific question to the Attorney General as to what view she takes as to whether or not this could be extended to Licence (A) holders, retailers, as well. I would just repeat that the Opposition supports this Bill and supports that it be dealt with by this Honourable House expeditiously to try to bring relief to those much in need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks to the Honourable and Learned Attorney General.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

As was said by my colleague, the Shadow Attorney General, we are very supportive of this legislation. I just have a few brief issues that I would invite the Minister to entertain.

I have been petitioned by a number of tour boat operators and a number of nightclub owners and they are very, very appreciative of the 50 per cent discount that has been presented by Government today. And they were wondering if we could make this retroactive back to March of last year when the Island was shut down by COVID-19. And so, would the Minister entertain basically making this retroactive to March of last year when COVID-19 first hit the Island? Because a lot of the tour boat operators have been out of business since then. So, that is something that I would like for the Minister to entertain on behalf of the tour boat operators.

The other issue that I would like to speak to is the Members' Club Licence. The Members' Club Licence is an interesting one. And I say interesting because the Members' Club can go from Warwick Club, Rangers Club, PHC, Hamilton Parish, St. George's Cricket Club, the Yacht Club, the Dinghy Club and the Mid Ocean Club.

And I am raising this because these membership clubs are basically supported by locals. And one would wonder whether they would have the same challenges as the tourist stakeholders—the hotels and the tour boat licences—because they have a captured Bermudian membership base that will probably sustain these premises, these Members' Club premises, all year round because most of the members are Bermudian.

One of the restauranteurs and one of the tour boat operators said, you know, *Where is the equity?* in that the Members' Clubs have sustained income because most of their members are Bermudians and yet the tourism establishments are challenged. And they wonder why . . . they wonder whether that fee can be revisited because of their sustained membership and their local captive audience, which should not vary much too much . . . very much at all because the membership is stagnant, and they are Bermudians and they are here and living here and so their businesses may continue. That was the one question that I was asked.

The other issue is, if we are issuing liquor licences to all the tourism establishments, and the licensed tour boat operators have the same timeframes as the restaurants, because they do dinner cruises, they do cocktail cruises, they do wedding cruises, they do the same things, in some cases, as the restaurants. And so, if the restaurants are restricted and they have to shut at eight o'clock, they have asked me to present their case and allow them to shut at eight o'clock and that they have the same restrictions as the restaurants.

So, I am inviting the Minister to consider remedying that inequity as well.

So, those are my comments. I look forward to the Attorney General's response.

Thank you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Honourable Member Famous, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. Are you hearing me well, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Loud and clear.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Are you seeing me well?

The Speaker: Not . . . no.

Go ahead and talk.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I take a moment to thank the Attorney General for her thanks to the Liquor Licensing Authority. I have sat on this Liquor Licensing Authority (appointed by her) for three and a half years, both under the chairmanship of the Worshipful Juan Wolffe and now Chairman Marc Daniels, and there is a lot of work that goes behind issuing liquor licences.

Mr. Speaker, we deal with both large and small business owners from Southampton Princess down to the corner store or the membership club, as the Honourable Opposition Member spoke about. Hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, tour boat operators, liquor stores, and membership clubs—there may be some I missed, but that is the bulk of what we deal with. And there are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of liquor licences throughout this country.

When someone applies for a liquor licence, which is now online, we scrutinise the application and then we physically . . . well, not now, but under normal circumstances we physically go out and inspect the premises, meaning we have to inspect to ensure that they have video cameras, ensure that the liquor is stored in a secure area, make sure they have adequate security so people cannot break in and steal the liquor, and there are a host of other things that the premises has to conform to in order to get a liquor licence. So, in other words, in order to get a liquor licence and maintain a liquor licence they have to go to great expense. So, I am quite sure that this reduction in rate will be welcome to them.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Opposition Member for constituency 22 speak about the retail outlets. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, during the last 13 months, other stores have had to close up, open up, close up, open up, membership clubs, tour boat operators, so on and so forth. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? Retail outlets such as grocery stores have been open 365 days a year, if not, some might

close on Sunday. So, for those who could not go to membership clubs to buy liquor, those that could not go to other places to buy liquor, they funnelled their cash right to the retail outlets.

In fact, they have made more money than before—in both grocery sales and liquor sales. So, I find it curious (as I say, curiouser and curiouser) that the Opposition Member for constituency 22 is appealing for them to have a reduction in their fee when they have made more money than everyone else. Basically, they have made money when everybody else has not.

So, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thanks again to the Attorney General for putting me on the Liquor Licensing Authority. It has been a very educational journey. And I want to take a moment to thank those that are on the Liquor Licensing Authority, namely: Chairman Marc Daniels; Deputy Chair Kendaree Burgess; Mr. Randy Scott (I think you know who he is) who is the Administrator; Mr. Kevin Smith; Ms. Tanya Esdaille (who holds it all together); and a few others.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I support this Bill and the rest of the Backbench support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Famous. Has your background got a little red in it today? I notice.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

No other Member?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I hear a voice.

Mr. Vance Campbell: MP Campbell here.

The Speaker: MP Campbell, yes, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Vance Campbell: With my tie and my jacket.

The Speaker: You look like you are coming to the prom today, MP.

Mr. Vance Campbell: I wish we could.

The Speaker: All right, now.

Mr. Vance Campbell: That means a lot of things that have had to happen would have already happened.

The Speaker: Yes, sir.

You can make your contribution.

Mr. Vance Campbell: I just want to make a comment in reference to what the Leader of the Opposition . . . something the Leader of the Opposition said just now,

where he was distinguishing between the members clubs . . . and I will declare my interest. I am the President of [the] Young Men's Social Club, which is a members club.

I think there is a misconception that membership clubs have this great source of revenue. You know, most membership clubs are experiencing dwindling membership and ageing membership. The young people are not joining in the same numbers that their parents or their uncles or aunties joined in the past. Many people who do join as members do not physically come to the clubs in the same manner that people used to attend clubs in the past. They used to be the hub of the community at one stage, and that seems to be dwindling in spite of the great efforts of clubs to reverse that.

Community clubs are . . . most membership clubs tend to be community clubs as well. So, whilst not making a lot of money, they are looking to put what money they do make back into their respective communities. So, whilst I may support the Member's claim or request for some additional relief for tourism-related entities, I did want to put it out there and make it clear that our community clubs, which many of them, if not most of them, are members clubs, are struggling and have been struggling for many years. So, I wanted to make it clear to the public, in case there was any doubt, that we are struggling as membership clubs, particularly those who are really community-focused.

So, with that, I just want to conclude my comments. But I felt it necessary to put that out there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none.

Madam Attorney General.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all Members who have spoken.

I have no doubt that this is an initiative that is supported across the parties and I am grateful for the comments that have been forthcoming in support. Thank you to the Shadow Attorney General MP Pearman, who facilitated the bipartisan support for us to have all three readings of the Bill today. It certainly goes to show that we can be joined on matters of interest and importance to this country.

I will say that, with regard to the retail point, that was adequately covered by colleagues as well. Retail outlets have not been included. There has been some advocacy lately with regard to their omission from this particular amendment. They are not generally viewed as having been disadvantaged economically during this pandemic to the extent of some of the other classes of licence holders that are covered by the amendment. I can also refer Members, and members

of the public as well to the statistics which I believe indicate that retail sales have, in fact, been up.

With regard to the comments by the Leader of the Opposition pertaining to equity, the Bill is not aimed at achieving equity amongst licence holders. It is simply meant to ensure that the most exposed licensed premises are given some relief during this period. And I appreciate, in particular, the remarks of MP Campbell that will more than adequately dispense any notion of inequity. So, thank you, MP Campbell.

I would like to also at this time, Mr. Speaker, thank the members of my team, in particular Amani Lawrence (who was the drafter of this Bill). However short, it has been received by members of the public and our Members positively. And Livingston Wedderburn who is the policy analyst that assisted as well.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Attorney General. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do not know, it looked like you really liked the background that MP [Christopher] Famous had. We will send you a picture of that.

The Speaker: It looked red from this side. Sometimes, you know, vision is a little different depending on what end of the Island you are at.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, I have heard you have got some different glasses, so I understand.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Okay.

House in Committee at 3:39 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

LIQUOR LICENSING (FEE REDUCTION) TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Liquor Licensing \(Fee Reduction\) Temporary Amendment Act 2021](#).

Attorney General, you have the floor.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move all three clauses at this time.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, this Bill makes provision for a temporary amendment to the Liquor Licence Act 1974 to reduce the licence fee for certain classes of liquor licence by one-half and to make the reduction in those licence fees temporary to enable a review of the reductions before the expiration of one year.

Clause 1 provides the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the Liquor Licence Act 1974 to provide for the reduction by one-half of the liquor licence fee for a Licence (B), a Hotel Licence, a Restaurant Licence, a Night Club Licence, a Proprietary Club Licence, a Members' Club Licence and a Tour Boat Licence.

Clause 3 provides for the expiration of the Bill after a one-year period, from the day it comes into operation, and gives the Minister responsible for liquor licensing the power to make an order before the expiration of the Bill, subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, to extend the Bill for an additional period should an extension be necessary.

The Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General.

Are there any further speakers to this Bill, the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it is MP Pearman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member Pearman, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Honourable and Learned Attorney General in respect of the Bill, just at clause 2 of the Bill, given the topic on the debate, clause 2 reduces the licences for all (B) licence holders but does not make any reduction for any (A) licence holders. That is correct is it?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: That is correct.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes. And I just note that the definition of a Licence (A) holder is someone where the sale of liquor is not to be consumed on the premises.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So that would apply, I think the examples we were talking about earlier were grocery stores, yes, but also to gas stations, also to liquor stores large or small, also wine shops. Those would all be Licence (A) holders, I believe.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: My second question is clause 3 of the Bill at page 2, please. And that, as I read it, suggests that this is a one-year reduction of 50 per

cent. I note that there was a discussion as to whether there would be any retrospectivity, but if one looks at clause 3(2) it also gives the relevant Minister responsible discretion to continue the reduction beyond the one-year period. And [is] the Honourable and Learned Attorney General the relevant Minister for the purposes of this Act?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The risk of taking control from the Honourable Minister of Finance and putting it in your hands, Learned Attorney General, is this is a discretion that you may consider? That is my last question.

The Chairman: Any further speakers to this Bill?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

So, I would like for the . . . in [clause] 2, just generally speaking, can we make this retrospective to March 2020 when COVID-19 first struck this Island and caused havoc to our tourism industry?

That is my question, thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Any further speakers to this Bill?
Attorney General.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Shadow Attorney General is correct in his interpretation of the licences covered. Licence (A) does, in fact, include sales as per his comment.

With regard to the discretion outlined in clause 3(2), that is in fact correct with respect to the Minister of Finance. The discretion lies with me.

And to the Opposition Leader, there is no intention, at this time, to make the reductions retroactive.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.
Minister, do you want to move clauses?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: Do the clauses first.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: I am sorry. I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you.

I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I now 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 appear to be none.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General.
Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

House resumed at 3:45 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

LIQUOR LICENCE (FEE REDUCTION) TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. No objections.
It has been reported and received as printed.

The next item on the Order Paper is [Order] No. 5, which I understand is being carried over, and we will move on to [Order] No. 6. [Order] No. 6 is the first, second and third reading of the Private Bill for the Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 in the name of MP Jackson.

MP Jackson.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the following petitions, together with the report of the Joint Select Committee on Private Bills, which was presented on 7 May 2021, be now considered: The petition of the Walsingham Trust and the petition of the Willowbank Foundation.

The Speaker: Members, I should have indicated that both [Orders No.] 6 and 7 were going to be done at the same time. So, we acknowledge that.

Members, are there any objections?

No objections.

Agreed to.

Continue, Member.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move for leave to introduce and read for the first time by their titles the following Private Bills entitled: The Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Speaker: Are there any objections, Members?

None.

Continue on, Member.

PRIVATE BILLS

FIRST READINGS

WALSINGHAM TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

WILLOWBANK FOUNDATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2021

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the prayers of the petitioners be granted and to give effect thereto that without prejudice leave be granted to bring in the proposed Bills reprinted to accord with the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Private Bills for the amendment thereof.

The Speaker: Again, Members, are there any objections?

No objections.

Continue, Member.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Ah . . .

The Speaker: Say that the necessary certificates . . . been notified the necessary certificates have been furnished, actually.

So, we will now move to . . . continue on now, Member. Yes.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The two Private Bills are hereby read for the first time by their titles only: the Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I move that under the provisions of the Standing Order 33(7)(a) the remaining stages of the said Private Bills be undertaken forthwith.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Agreed to.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

WALSINGHAM TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

WILLOWBANK FOUNDATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2021

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the said Private Bills be now read the second time in the House by their titles only: the Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Agreed to.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the clauses and preambles of the said Private Bills be approved.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: The preamble and clauses passed]

PRIVATE BILLS

THIRD READINGS

WALSINGHAM TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

WILLOWBANK FOUNDATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2021

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the two said Private Bills be now read the third time in the House by their titles only and passed. Their titles are: the Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Agreed to.

The said Private Bills are now passed.

[Motion carried: The Walsingham Trust Amendment Act 2021 and Willowbank Foundation (Amendment) Act 2021 were read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Members, that brings us to a close of the Order Paper for today. We will now do our third readings on the Bills that require third readings. And we will start with the Premier.

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 Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 to be read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
No objections.
Continue, Premier.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

GAMING (TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS) ACT 2021

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

I move that the Bill entitled the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 be now for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

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 Betting Act 2021 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
No objections.
Continue, Premier.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

BETTING ACT 2021

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

I move that the Bill entitled the Betting Act 2021 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has now been read for a third time by its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Betting Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The next one—the Regulations—does not require a third reading.

The next would be that of the Attorney General.

Madam Attorney General, would you like to do your Bill?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time?

There are none.

Continue, Attorney General.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

LIQUOR LICENCE (FEE REDUCTION) TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Mr. Speaker, 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 its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: *The Liquor Licence (Fee Reduction) Temporary Amendment Act 2021* was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.
That brings a close to the day of business.
Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, the 21st of May [2021].

The Speaker: Would it be in order for me to ask, would anyone like to speak to that motion?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, that sounds like Minister Scott.
Minister Scott, would you like to make a brief comment or two?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I would. Just a brief comment about something that I believe is important and should be shared.

The Speaker: Well, you have your 20 minutes.

SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
And Mr. Speaker, I will start by asking you a question if you have ever heard the saying being *behind the power curve*? My understanding is that for those Members that might not have heard of it, I think that it would be helpful if they were to imagine that they are a pilot, they are sitting in the left seat or the captain's seat on final approach to a runway and they see that they are losing altitude. They see their visual indicators are all in the red. They see those trees getting closer. And it is clear that on their present approach that they are going to land well short of the runway.

So, in order to stop that descent, they start to add power, they start to pull back on the yoke to raise the nose. But Mr. Speaker, the aircraft is still sinking. So, they push on the throttle levers even more, as far forward as they can go. Now they have pulled full power in, desperate for a climb, pulling further back on the yoke, but the aircraft continues to descend.

Mr. Speaker, welcome to what is commonly known in the aviation industry as being on the *backside of the power curve*. And if it catches you off guard, it is not a happy place to be.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you hear about pilots talking about being behind the power curve, it usually is in the context of a situation where one is really be-

hind the external circumstances and it will take a lot of catching up for them to just even get back to breaking even.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I share this with you is because, unfortunately, the OBA has had this country flying behind the power curve since March 2017. And that happened when they signed the project agreement with Aecon for the Passenger Terminal Redevelopment Project.

So, Mr. Speaker, despite committing this country to an agreement in which all the risk is solely on the Government to increase passenger numbers . . . or let us put it this way. If passenger numbers drop, it is the sole responsibility of the Government to ensure that the developer and the operator get their money's worth and are not out any money. And they did not ensure that we had a Plan B as a country.

But in all fairness, Mr. Speaker, why should they care if we have a Plan B? And Plan B being a way, an initiative, a plan, a programme, to increase passenger arrival numbers.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is, Why should they? Because they . . . for whatever reasons, the OBA felt as though, hey, air service development is Skyport's responsibility.

So then, if air service development is Skyport's responsibility, then why is the PLP Government able to tout the recent additions of Azores Airlines as a route and the doubling of flights for our summer? The reason is because for the first two years of the project agreement from 2017 to 2019, when Skyport was responsible for air service development, they did absolutely nothing positive to advance or increase the air service. All they did was come up with an option that would have had British Airways competing against a sister airline of them at the expense of the Government.

Therefore, in 2019 when the Airport Authority advised the Government that an air service development plan or strategy was a big . . . and not even just a big, was too important for us to allow that to fail, and then the Government decided to allow the Airport Authority to take over, six months after that. Six months after implementing our air service development plan the country was . . . it was announced that the Azores Airlines would start flying to Bermuda. That is a demographic that has a potential of 250,000 additional persons that can come to the Island now.

And, even now, the recent increase in scheduled flight activity is directly related to our homeporting initiative.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that the Government is trying to get from behind the power curve. But despite the significant successes, the OBA's decision has cost this country nearly \$21 million, Mr. Speaker. And how do we come up with \$21 million? Over the last six months we have paid \$5.7 million in July of [2020] in MRGs, we then paid \$15.2 million in October in MRGs.

And Mr. Speaker, the only thing more frustrating than having the Government to pilot the responsibility, having the Government having to fly this proverbial aircraft from behind the power curve and get us back on the glideslope or at least to straight and level flight, Mr. Speaker, is that the novice pilots that got us into this mess . . . and Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence if I can quote for a minute from the *Royal Gazette*.

The Speaker: Only for a minute, how is that?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you very much

These novice pilots have the nerve to say, Mr. Speaker, that the “OBA respectfully suggests that the payment process needs to be reviewed again, to reconsider the validity . . . [of the] . . . payment.” Mr. Speaker, Whisky Tango Foxtrot.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Whisky Tango Foxtrot, Mr. Speaker! And if you want to know what I am meaning, take the first letter of each one of those words and you will see what the acronym is.

But, Mr. Speaker, that was from the *Royal Gazette*. The Shadow Minister cannot be serious! He cannot be seriously asking the Government to add or make changes to the project agreement. The Member . . . he is a Learned Member, Mr. Speaker. A Learned Member. And for those who are not in the House of Assembly and not familiar with the terms that we are using, a “Learned Member” means a lawyer. He is a lawyer, Mr. Speaker. So, he should know that the project agreement does not contain a variation clause, which [means it] does not allow the Government the ability to change or amend anything in that, short of having both parties agree.

We have already gone to Skyport. We have gone to Aecon. And they refuse to come to the negotiation table, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, the project agreement in its current state has been specifically written in such a manner to ensure that Skyport and Aecon will always have more money than what they need at any given time. And it is the Bermuda Government’s burden to ensure that it stays that way.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Shadow Minister and the rest of the Opposition have, for all intents and purposes, gone out in the media to complain about the manner in which the Government is honouring the contractual obligations that they themselves committed us to. The audacity, Mr. Speaker!

They got us into an agreement where passenger numbers are key, but did not put a programme in to increase, maintain, or at least monitor passenger numbers. We had to do that Mr. Speaker. And now that we are doing that, in the instance to help mitigate the risk, they are saying we should not be paying the MRG [Minimum Revenue Guarantee]. And if, Mr.

Speaker, . . . and let me just be clear about what would happen if we did not pay the MRG. If we do not pay the MRG, we would be in default. And if we are in default—

[Inaudible interjection]

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes. We never said that the MRG should not be paid. And the Honourable Minister is misleading the House by saying that we have.

The Speaker: It is noted.
Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Okay, Mr. Speaker, I will move on.

Mr. Speaker, they got us into this mess. We are cleaning the mess up that they have made and they are complaining that we are cleaning it up.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you how this agreement works when it comes to the MRG. Skyport essentially gives the Airport Authority an invoice, tells them they have 10 days in which to pay it. The Airport Authority does not have the ability to change or to challenge those numbers. The only time any check and balance is done is in December. And in December, it is done by an external independent firm. That happened this last December.

That independent auditing firm determined that there were \$4.2 million in excess. Meaning, they had an extra \$4.2 million in that account. That money was refunded to us and then when we had to pay the next MRG, which was in April, we used the money out of that refund to pay it. And that is what the Shadow Minister complained about. The Shadow Minister tried to insinuate that the chairman of the Airport Authority made a mistake. Nowhere—

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

The Speaker: We have a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Minister is again misleading the House. I did not complain about the payment. And it was MP Foggo who described it as a mistaken payment; it was not me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker,—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: —the Honourable Member's quote in the *Royal Gazette* is using the word "mistaken." When referring to the—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I am point-of-ordering the Learned Member—

The Speaker: Hold on, Member. We will take your point of order. Just calm and present your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At no time did I, as Chairman of the Bermuda Airport Authority [BAA], ever refer to information being shared about the MRG payments as having been a mistake. I do not know where the Learned Member is getting his information. Perhaps it is from the *Royal Gazette*, that at no time interviewed me, called me, or sought any information from me regarding the MRG payments.

The Minister made no mistake and the Minister has very clearly articulated what transpired right down to the letter. And so I would like the Member—

The Speaker: Your point of order has been noted.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, whether I point-of-order a point of order. The Honourable Member spoke on the BBC on television and it can be watched on *Bernews*. She can—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: That is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. He is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, and

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: —[INAUDIBLE]—

The Speaker: Member. Member.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Member! We are not going to have a to and fro back and forth. You can make your contributions after the Minister has finished his presentation.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Well, I just want point of order—

The Speaker: No, no, no, no!—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: He—

The Speaker: Member! We are not having that. I am not having that.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Well, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: No, no, no! You are finished.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: A point of order again.

The Speaker: No, no, you are finished.
Minister, continue on, please.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, regardless of what was said in the past, regardless of what was said in a meeting in the last week or two, the fact remains that the OBA committed us to this obligation and they are now complaining about the fact that we are living . . . we are maintaining our obligation as per the project agreement.

Mr. Speaker, \$21 million! [That] \$21 million could have allowed the Ministry of Transport to do work up at Dockyard to allow an Oasis Class ship to come into Dockyard which would have been an additional \$20 million in economic stimulus. [That] \$20 million would have paid for 60 new buses, Mr. Speaker. And we could then be able to take our children to and from school on dedicated school runs. Mr. Speaker, \$20 million would mean that the Government could cover every private vehicle licensing for the year.

So, Mr. Speaker, the then OBA Government said it was a good deal. And they still believe it is a good deal now even though there is a possibility that by the time we get to a place where we are no longer paying MRGs, we could have paid up to \$80 million to Aecon. So, I do not want to hear the Opposition Leader, who was in Cabinet at the time, I do not want to hear the former Premier, Michael Dunkley, I do not want to hear the former Premier Cannonier say a single iota, vowel or letter disparaging anything this Government does when it comes to that airport. And if they do, they should be ashamed of themselves because they did not know what they were doing then, and they do not know what they are saying about it now.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Airport Authority is doing their job. The Airport Authority is going as far as trying to create additional revenue streams so that we can mitigate the cost or mitigate the risk of having to pay an MRG. That is where these new roads come from. And to think that for two years nothing was done,

when it was the responsibility of Aecon and Skyport. But in six months this Government can get something done. This Government can sow green shoots and see them start to grow.

So, if the Shadow Minister of Transport does decide to take his opportunity and his right on the motion to adjourn to get up and speak, I hope the first words he says are, *I am sorry*. And I hope the second words he says are, *How can we help?*

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that I have clearly articulated what goes on when it comes to MRGs. I think I have clearly articulated that there was no mistake. There is no misspeak when it comes to how we are . . . what we said about the MRG and how we are going about the MRGs. And I hope the Opposition takes a long hard look at themselves and changes their conduct so that they do not speak just for the sake of speaking, but they speak when they know what they are talking about and have something worthwhile to say.

Mr. Speaker, right now we are flying behind the power curve. It is not impossible to get out of, but it surely is difficult. And there is another term that comes to mind, Mr. Speaker. I think it can go hand in hand. It is that *money is power*, and we are flying behind the power curve because Skyport and Aecon are getting all the money. So, Mr. Speaker—

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: I think you may have heard that alarm. It is letting me know that your 20-minute time has run out, sir.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for your contribution.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

No other Member?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I was looking for the gavel that time.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Mr. Simmons, how are you today, sir?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I am fantastic, sir. And a lovely day for [INAUDIBLE]

The Speaker: Well, you have your 20 minutes right there.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This weekend Bermuda will join with countries around the world in observing Mother's Day. I would like to begin by wishing all of our sister MPs, on both sides of the divide, a happy Mother's Day and a restful and fulfilling one.

With Mother's Day being on the horizon, I am led to reflect not just on my personal mother and my wife who is the mother of my children, but the mother of our party, the Progressive Labour Party, some would say the mother of a nation to be, the Honourable Dame Lois Browne-Evans, a national hero to national heroes.

When we look at her life and the scope of her life, at her best, she represented brilliance. At her best, she represented compassion, empathy, grass-roots connected with the people. She was not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. But for many of us who look to what we can do to make our country better, she is someone we can look to and learn a lot from. And she was someone who even though she is no longer with us, and left us so many years ago, we can still learn from her example and the lessons that she taught at her best.

The PLP, Mr. Speaker, is at its best when we stand up for the small man, the unheard, and those who feel they are unvalued and unwanted in our own country. The PLP is at our best, we are at our best, when words like *humility, compassion, listening, and understanding* are what people associate us with, instead of *arrogance, condescension and not listening*. We are at our best when we go beyond saying and mouthing the right words and go toward giving our people a vision that improves and transforms the lives of our Bermudian people. We are at our best when we remember why we are here and who put us here in this Honourable House.

Dame Lois understood that. She remembered who put her in her seat and remembered what we fought for all those years in the Opposition, in the wilderness of opposition. And so she and all those who sacrificed, all those who blazed the trail, who set the example, look down on us and want to see us at our best, performing at our best, representing at our best, the people who sent us here, remembering always why we are here. Those who look up to us want to see us at our best, performing at our best, and remembering who put us here and why we are here.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the legacy of Dame Lois. I am grateful for the legacy of all who blazed the trail before us, all of the women who sacrifice to serve in this Chamber, or in the other place, all those who carry themselves under the banner, who carry the banner of the Progressive Labour Party during elections in seats where they barely lost or where they had no chance of winning. I am appreciative to all of you.

I am also appreciative to my mother and to my wife and wish them a happy Mother's Day as well. But most importantly I am grateful today not just for that

but for the people who put me here and who constantly remind me of why I am here. I am grateful, grateful, grateful.

It has been said that the hand that rocks the cradle shapes the world. We have our mothers to thank for setting the example, for showing us the way to go, and at our best pushing us to be even better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Simmons.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

No other Member? I think—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Foggo. Would you like to continue the discussion you were having earlier?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Well, I—

The Speaker: Continue. You have got your 30 . . . your 20 minutes. I almost gave you 30 minutes.

SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you.

I just simply want to start by thanking the Minister for clearly articulating what was prescribed by the project agreement that existed between Skyport and the BAA, and therefore the Bermuda Government, by extension. Maybe the Member who spoke on a point of order to the Minister perhaps forgot some of what he had to say when he spoke publicly here [in] the *Royal Gazette*. And, Mr. Speaker, that particular Member said in the *Royal Gazette*, and I quote, if you allow, on April the 26th.

The Speaker: A brief quote.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you. He said, “At a time when our economy is struggling—and we so desperately need to pay careful attention to the people’s money—the media report that the PLP may have made a mistaken \$4 million payment at the airport is deeply concerning.”

He accepted what was (I guess) put out to the public domain through the medium of the *Royal Gazette* and made a comment consequently because of that. I am just going to briefly speak to reiterate the main point that the Minister so extremely well-articulated regarding the arrangement between Skyport and the Bermuda Airport Authority.

The Bermuda Airport Authority does not have the luxury of operating freely to try and do things that is in keeping with the people’s best interest, especially when it has to do with the MRG and the public purse. We reached out on more than one occasion to Skyport to try and arrive at a different arrangement

that we thought would be in everyone’s best interest in terms of trying to minimise the payments that we pay out and keeping them to an exact number by having them do their homework first and figure out what is exactly owed instead of having to go through a convoluted process where we, the people, pay funds over and above what is necessary and put in the escrow account for Skyport if we do not meet that minimum revenue that is realised through air flights.

Mr. Speaker, the project agreement clearly outlines how we are to interact with Bermuda Skyport. We must—it is not optional, we must—pay any payments that they provide [the amount] to us. We make the payments of those funds because that is not something that is a part of our regular financial budget. We have to confer with the Bermuda Government to make certain that we meet those payments, and those payments are carried out within the 10-day timeframe.

I want to make it very clear that because we are very cognisant of the further burden that our Government would have to take on if we defaulted on those payments, we make certain to ensure that we have to do what we have to do in the timeframe that is prescribed because, as has been stated, in a prescription that never considered the people of Bermuda in terms of taking care of their interests, we feel compelled and duty-bound to make certain that nothing in our behaviour and actions further exacerbates the relationship that we have that would allow us to fall into default, perhaps forcing our Government to pay an untold amount of money in terms of . . . as a penalty.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want the Bermuda public to be extremely clear that the main remit of the Bermuda Airport Authority is to provide them with a stellar first-class airport and therefore first-class service within. And in doing our job, we provide a requisite oversight to ensure that our partner, Skyport, operates in a manner that is beneficial for our people. And we do everything within our power to make certain that this happens. And we do everything within our power to make sure that we never suffer any reputational risk to our airport because we know what a travesty that would end up being. We are doing everything to make sure our airport stays open. We are doing everything to make sure that we comply with all regulations internationally, even with the project agreement, and that is what we will continue to do.

And, again, the Bermuda public needs to know that whatever payments we make, we make according to the project agreement as prescribed. And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Foggo.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Mr. Premier, I suggest that you take your position now.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Famous?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes.

The Speaker: You almost lost your few minutes that time.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Oh, well, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Mr. Famous, you have—

COVID-19—CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the Honourable Jamahl Simmons for making mention of the mother of this nation, Dame Lois Browne-Evans, who I can proudly say is my aunt.

Mr. Speaker, he spoke of decisions that not only her but the founders, Mr. Arnold Francis, Mr. Walter Robinson, so on and so forth, L. Frederick Wade, had to make on behalf of the people of Bermuda, even as we were not Government, not the elected Government, but we have always been the people's Government.

Mr. Speaker, here is the thing. There is a thing called "populism" and a thing called "pragmatism." Over the last month—

The Speaker: As you are speaking, let me just remind you. We can hear you but we do not see you, but we can hear you. I think you have your camera on, but it is on a blank screen at the moment.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry. Thank you. Can you see me now?

The Speaker: Keep talking. There you go.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, he should have left the camera off with that behind him.

The Speaker: Well, I was hoping he would have gotten the hint earlier and got something red behind him by now. But continue on.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, next week you will see something red, Mr. Speaker. I promise you.

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, over the last month, PLP MPs across this country have had to comfort many families who have faced sudden loss of a family member. It is heart-wrenching to call people—we cannot visit them at this time, but to call them up—it is heart-wrenching to have to hear their anguish when suddenly losing a loved one. And it is even more heart-wrenching, Mr. Speaker, when members of the public, want-to-be politicians, make up these false conspiracy theories. The thing is, Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for people to make up a conspiracy theory. Not so easy to actually prove the conspiracy theory. When you dive deep into these conspiracy theories, you realise the person is talking a lot of garbage.

One claim that came out recently, Mr. Speaker, was that Bermuda has put in more punitive measure than any other Caribbean island. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am the liaison for CARICOM for this country. So I checked with my contemporaries and asked them to send me their quarantine information. From Jamaica to Saint Kitts, to Aruba to Barbados, Cayman Islands, BVI, all the quarantine regulations are pretty much the same. In some countries, it is even a little bit tighter than Bermuda. So, that conspiracy theory gets thrown out the window.

Another conspiracy theory, Mr. Speaker, probably the greatest one, the most laughable one, is that this Government, the people's Government, Dame Lois Browne-Evans' Government, is subjected to the whims and control of some super rich people who are telling us to lock down the Island, put our people in quarantine and hold them down and put a jab on their arm.

Mr. Speaker, that is laughable. Not only because the persons who say it have no proof of this, zero proof, the fact of the matter is that the entire world is facing what is borderline mass death. For countries such as India, who had no regulations, allowed people to walk around with no masks, having mass gatherings, no quarantines, countries such as Brazil, with a right-wing president, who says COVID-19 is no more than a flu (similar to what these conspiracy theorists say), are now seeing the death rate of 4,000 people per week. Mr. Speaker, 4,000 families who are grieving every week because their leaders did not stand up against populism.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the public to ask themselves this: Which government around the world is going to kill off their own support base? None! Because if you kill off your own support base, you have no one to vote for you in the next election. Even more so, if you kill off your own MPs, you have nobody to run for you in the next election. So that conspiracy theory gets thrown right out the door, Mr. Speaker.

Even more laughable, Mr. Speaker, in Bermuda's context is this. We all know that there is distinctively Two Bermudas: Black Bermuda and white Bermuda. What I find ironic, and I ask these conspiracy theorists this, Why is it that all these white Bermu-

dians, whether they be local or expats, are lining up to get a vaccine from a Black Government? Which white people are willing to die because David Burt said *Get a vaccine?* There are none! They get it because they know that it . . . I do not want to say it saves lives totally, but it minimises the chance of spread and/or hospitalisation.

We get the fact that not everybody can take a vaccine because of religious reasons, medical reasons, personal reasons, we understand that. But we also understand many people are hesitant because these conspiracy theorists are out there spreading outright lies. But none of these conspiracy theorists have to go and comfort families when a loved one passes away. They are on the sidelines saying, *Well, it's only 1 per cent. Or It's only 6 per cent of the seniors who are going to die.* So what they are saying is that out of 100 seniors (anybody over 70), they are willing to let 6 of them die so that they can walk around with no masks, not have to quarantine, and not have to social distance. *Just be like Florida*, they say.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, as politicians, we are more than politicians. We are family, whether biological or because we live in the same constituency, or because we all go to Alaska Hall. Even to some extent, the OBA are family. Distant, very distant, but they are family. So when I see people make all these attacks against our Ministers, starting from the Premier, making all these sorts of cartoons and all sorts of names, attacking the Health Minister who has worked herself off for the last 15 months straight, attacking Minister Ming, attacking any Minister, even Minister Diallo Rabain when he was trying to protect students, as a politician, you learn to take the licks. But as family, it is hurtful when you see people making all these allegations, false allegations, conspiracy allegations against our family.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is what I would say to the people of Bermuda. We are not in this because we want to be popular. We are not in this because we are trying to win the next election. We are in this because at this point in time, at this point in history, we are trying to save people's lives. We are trying to save people's jobs. We are trying to save businesses. The Government has taken a hit all the way around. But we still trot on, Mr. Speaker. We have our various opinions inside Alaska Hall, as you know. But when it comes to the House of Assembly and when it comes to legislation, we are united.

None of us wants to have to call another family to say, *Sorry to hear your friend, or your uncle (or somebody) passed away because of this disease.* COVID-19 is real, Mr. Speaker. For those who are spreading lies to say it is fake, I ask you to consider. Go around Augustus's on any given day and ask yourself if those tears of family members are fake. Go around St. John's or any graveyard in this country and ask yourself whether those graves are fake.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close here and say I am proud to be a member of this Progressive Labour Party at this time because what I see and what I feel and what I know is that we are dealing with pragmatism to save lives and not populism to attempt to look good on social media. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, Renee Ming.

The Speaker: Minister Ming. How are you today?

Hon. Renee Ming: I am fine, thank you.

The Speaker: Good. You have your 20 minutes.

Hon. Renee Ming: I will not even be that long, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, I do not have that awesome backdrop like the person who spoke before me, but I will work on getting that.

The Speaker: Do you wish to be acknowledged next time?

Hon. Renee Ming: Sorry?

The Speaker: Continue on.

MOTHER'S DAY

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to use my time today to actually give a shout-out for Mother's Day. Mr. Speaker, one of the happiest three days of my life are the days that I gave birth to my three absolutely wonderful children. I know that it is not always an easy path—

The Speaker: Especially the youngest one; right?

Hon. Renee Ming: —but it is a path I would never change, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Renee Ming: Let's not talk about the youngest one, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, the youngest one is my favourite. You know that.

Hon. Renee Ming: I wonder why!

The Speaker: Well, she knows the right team to support.

Hon. Renee Ming: Even with the—

The Speaker: She doesn't let where she lives determine who she supports.

[Laughter]

Hon. Renee Ming: We have to work on—

The Speaker: Go right ahead. Don't let me interrupt. Continue.

Hon. Renee Ming: Even with their flaws and their faults we love them unconditionally. That will never change, Mr. Speaker. But I would just like to say Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers out there because there is no handbook that anyone could have given us when we became moms. It is a path and a story and a chapter book that you will write on your own. It is the hardest job you will ever love. And most moms who I know would never change any part of it, no matter how hard it became. We love unconditionally. We love with everything that we have in us. So I want to shout-out to all the moms out there.

But I would also like to recognise those persons who although they may not have given birth to a child, they love and nurture children. They look for the good in children and they freely share themselves in the capacity of a mother. Mother's Day is extremely special. Mother's Day could be every day, Mr. Speaker, but it is celebrated this year on May 9th. And I would just like to shout-out to all the moms and wish them the best Mother's Day ever. I hope that whatever they do they enjoy it, and of course, that they stay within our COVID-19 guidelines and regulations. Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you for your contribution, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Adams. You have your 20 minutes, sir.

COVID-19 AND THE EDGE OF THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am not a health guy. I do not mind sharing that because I know my strengths and I know my weaknesses. I have long accepted that not everything is for everybody. When it comes to biochemistry and medical and health science, I can tell you that it is just not my thing. Mr. Speaker, I do not know much about DNA, how it works and the decades of research involved by doctors and scientists. I do not

know much about how the Messenger RNA [mRNA vaccines] corresponds to the genetic sequence of a gene and is then read by a ribosome. Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what a ribosome even is. I do not know the intricate details of a mutating virus and antigenic drift versus an antigenic shift, but I do know, Mr. Speaker, that if I studied this stuff in depth over the last two years, I still would not know half as much as our CMO Dr. Weldon and others.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am not a health guy, so I am not here to debate the vaccine, or different variances of the coronavirus, the toll it has taken on our only hospital, COVID-19 deaths, or the long-term effects it has the body. Instead, my emphasis tonight is really where we are economically, the impact COVID-19 has had on our economy and the path the Government is looking to take to get us to where we ultimately want to be.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's national debt has increased by \$2.1 billion since 2009 and is currently \$3.35 billion. In this fiscal year alone we are obligated to pay over \$127 million on just the interest on that debt. We still have the airport guarantee over our heads and still feeling the impact of Morgan's Point.

Mr. Speaker, our last fiscal year is estimated to result in a deficit of over \$245 million. We spent \$60 million on unemployment benefits to over 10,000 people last year and \$3 million thus far to those whose income was negatively impacted by COVID-19. The impact of unemployment, Mr. Speaker, is amplified because not only did it end up costing us in the form of unemployment benefits, but also meant that we saw a significant shortfall in the payroll tax collected. So not only did COVID-19 cause us to spend more than we planned, but also caused us to fall short in what we planned to receive.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying, last year our tourism industry completely suffered with air arrivals down 84 per cent, cruise arrivals down 98 per cent, and overall visitor spending down 87 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister stated two months ago that we are on the edge of the fiscal cliff. But the question is, What does that even really mean? You see, for years, under both parties, the Government has been operating under a deficit. Meaning, more money has been spent than received. And to cover that deficit, the Government ultimately borrowed the money. You see, Mr. Speaker, life can feel just fine as long as you are swiping your credit card. But as we all know, at some point the card has a limit and at some point the card has to be paid. And so going off the fiscal cliff is a point where we might not be able to borrow anymore. And Mr. Speaker, we are dangerously close to that point.

Mr. Speaker, if we cannot borrow anymore, some very difficult conversations will inevitably need to be had. Going off the fiscal cliff could lead to families earning even less, even further unemployment, and investors having less confidence investing in

Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, this is not a threat, not a means of control, but rather to simply be honest, truthful and transparent as to where we are as a country.

Mr. Speaker, the fragile state of our economy is not our only concern. For instance, there are very real threats to Bermuda's IB sector, our largest economic pillar—the sector that has kept us afloat during the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the OECD and others publicly stated their intent to implement initiatives that could potentially remove some of Bermuda's competitive advantages. Just last week Wednesday, President Biden labelled Bermuda a tax haven in front of the world in his recent presidential address. The EU is constantly scrutinising Bermuda with the threat of keeping us on their greylist. Put simply, Mr. Speaker, there are governments and large organisations around the world right now targeting our IB.

Mr. Speaker, I have not even mentioned climate risk. Most Bermudians know and understand that at any given point we are one significant hurricane away from being devastated. And so while we take pride in our ability to bounce back from hurricanes in recent memory, the truth is we never know what the next one will be. And I will remind those listening, Hurricane Fabian cost this country hundreds of millions of dollars in damages, and that forecasters predict a very active hurricane season in 2021. And so, Mr. Speaker, what this ultimately boils down to is that as a country we simply cannot afford another [Covid-19] outbreak. Another outbreak could very well be the catalyst that sends us over the fiscal cliff.

Mr. Speaker, all is not lost. We do not operate under doom and gloom. There is light at the end of the tunnel. I will concur with the Premier's comments and say that we have the best Finance Minister Bermuda has ever had on the job. Minister Dickinson and his team have worked tirelessly to detail an economic recovery plan designed to get us back to a balanced budget, stabilize our economy and begin to pay down our debt within three years. A plan, I might add, that helped S&P [Standard & Poor's] reaffirm our credit rating.

But here is the key, Mr. Speaker, in order for the Government to execute its plan, the return of our tourism industry is absolutely essential. And so when entities such as the CDC are advising travellers to avoid coming to Bermuda because of the high levels of COVID-19 it reemphasises my point which is, simply, that we simply cannot afford another outbreak. We must do any and everything we can to eliminate local transmission, reduce the number of active cases so we can get back to showing the world that Bermuda is a safe destination for tourists and foreign investment. The piggy bank theory still applies, Mr. Speaker. We must have money coming in before any money can go out.

So, Mr. Speaker, this leads me to my overall point. I know people are tired of living under these restrictions, having curfews, gathering limits and the

like. So am I. So are my colleagues. But I say with confidence that if this country goes over the fiscal cliff, our conditions could be much, much worse. Again, this is not a threat. This is not me saying this as a method of control. This is simply me being as honest, truthful and transparent as I can be. We cannot afford another outbreak.

Mr. Speaker, I know some of the decisions being made may feel extreme. I know that some are unpopular. I know some may even feel unfair. But the truth is there are no easy answers. Mr. Speaker, I am constantly asked *Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty?* And my answer is because the innocent have suffered for the guilty. We have seen people hospitalised because their family member broke the rules and ended up bringing COVID-19 home. We have seen how an employee's poor decision crippled a small business. We have seen instability in our schools when a parent sent their child who was not feeling well to school. It only takes one, Mr. Speaker—one rule breaker, one person to make a mistake, one person to think it is no big deal—and the next thing we know there is another outbreak that begins with a variant that could potentially be much worse.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end with an apology. I have spent this entire time speaking about the economics, what we cannot afford and the potential risk, and I realise it can come across as insensitive because there are grieving families out there, Mr. Speaker, families right now praying for their loved ones [who are] hospitalised. There are health care workers and lab technicians, true Bermudian heroes, risking their own lives, working around the clock who are beyond tired and just want this to stop. I want them to know that we hear them. And so I apologise.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government we are often tasked with making difficult decisions. I want to make it crystal clear that the health and safety of the people of Bermuda is this Government's number-one priority. And we will go to great lengths to protect it whilst fully aware that we simply cannot afford another outbreak. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Adams.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, MP Campbell.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Campbell. You have your 20 minutes.

FOSTER CARE MONTH

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking Minister Tinee Furbert for reminding some of us and making some of us aware that May is Foster Care Month. I would also like to add my thanks to the foster

parents for the great work that they do. And as a former foster parent, I would encourage others to become a foster parent. It is important work. It is much needed. And it is extremely rewarding. So, please, if you have any interest, reach out to Mrs. Selina Simons at the Department of Child and Family Services and register your interest.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I would next like to wish all the mothers in Bermuda, especially my mother, my wife and the mothers of constituency 9, a very special and blessed Mother's Day this coming Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, our mothers are strong and they are resilient. And they have had to demonstrate that strength and resilience over this past 12 to 15 months. Some have had to balance work commitments whilst dealing with children who are remote learning [at home for] school. Some are essential workers who have worked long hours in the fight against the coronavirus. Some have had to do all of what I have just mentioned while dealing with a family member who is sick, or worse, who has passed, as a result of the coronavirus. So, again, I would like to thank all the mothers of Bermuda for what you do.

Mr. Speaker, the coronavirus has dominated the news. The fight against the coronavirus has dominated the time and attention of the Government at a time when our energies need to be focused on improving our economy. However, Mr. Speaker, despite all the attention commanded by the coronavirus, we have heard some good news here today and earlier this week. We heard the Finance Minister both today and a number of days ago speak about the S&P ratings, A+ on long-term sovereign credit [and] senior unsecured debt; A-1 on short-term rating and AA+ on transfer and convertibility assessments, overall a "stable" outlook. That is good news given the circumstances. Well done to the Minister and his team!

Now this affirmation does not support the narrative of those who seek to discredit the efforts of this Government. But it is a positive for this country. Today we heard the Deputy Premier speak of the Department of Planning Statistics as they relate to the state of the construction industry, and that was positive news. We heard the Minister of Public Works speak to the positive impact of his Ministry's stimulus programme for small and medium-sized contractors. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the announcement was made that we will move into phase 2, [on] Sunday, which will help many businesses and many individuals to earn more hours and thereby be able to better provide for themselves and their families.

On Monday the Minister, Minister Hayward, reported that there had been 800 applications for the one-year "Work from Bermuda Residential Certificate." And I believe he mentioned that 700 (or just over 700)

had been approved and about 400 people are currently on Island as a result of that programme. They are renting. They are purchasing goods, food, clothing; they are injecting money into the economy.

We also have been updated, and we know, that the moratorium due to the pandemic on issuing new work permits for closed categories has been extended by three months, or until the end of July, looking out for our people.

The Government continues to encourage the hiring of Bermudians; they have put measures in place. Mr. Speaker, 176 unemployed Bermudians have been assisted by Workforce Development to date for a mix of training, professional development and internships. And Workforce Development continues to train our people and develop them for the opportunities that are to come, to make sure our people are job ready. So there is some good news amongst the pessimism. There is some good news in the backdrop with the fight against the coronavirus.

Now, I want to touch on some areas of life which are referred to as *hindsight is 20/20*. In some parts of the sports world, they speak about *Monday morning quarterback*. It is easy to wait and find out how things turn out to then say *We could have done it better. It is easy if I wait long enough, I will know exactly what to do*. But it will be too late. So, a lot of the criticism aimed at the Government is what they could have done—what they should have done six, seven, eight months ago. Monday morning quarterbacks. *Hindsight is 20/20. If I wait long enough, I will know what the winning lottery numbers are*. But it will be too late to enter the lottery.

So this Government will act and it will act according to the information on hand and the decisions that are required to be made at the time. We will not hesitate and put people's lives at risk. We will use the science uppermost in all of our decisions during this time about the physical well-being of our people and the economic well-being of our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Campbell.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time? Any other Member?

Mr. Premier.

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right. It looks like you might be getting your wish: Home before curfew.

The Speaker: Ah, you see [the gavel] in my hand.

[Laughter]

COVID-19—GOVERNMENT DIVERTED, BUT CONTINUES TO DELIVER ON ITS PROMISES

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a while since we have been back in the House of Assembly and a lot has happened certainly over this past month. And unfortunately, Bermuda has witnessed its most deadly month in the intervening months with the pandemic.

As a number of my colleagues on this side of the House on the Government benches noted and indicated, it has certainly been difficult for those of us having to console, to call and try to comfort families who are dealing and grieving with loss. There is a significant amount of hurt and pain inside of this community, Mr. Speaker. So whether it is the comments from MP Adams when speaking about the economic challenges of which the country is facing or whether it is the comments from other Members, MP Chris Famous, speaking about the real challenges inside of our community. And the MP from constituency 9, Mr. Vance Campbell, who just spoke, there is a lot that is going on in our community, Mr. Speaker. But here is what I can say. I know that there are a lot of persons who question what the Government is doing. But I cannot repeat enough, Mr. Speaker, that in this House all 36 of us have a moral imperative to do what is best for the people of this country. And oftentimes the medicine does not taste good, but it is necessary in order to fix things.

It was just over seven months ago, Mr. Speaker, that this Government was re-elected. And just over seven months ago we ran our campaign which said strong leadership for us. And it has been an incredibly difficult time since then, Mr. Speaker, having to deal with two waves of coronavirus infections. The first one in November/December and the second one which we know erupted in March and saw the April of which we have had, Mr. Speaker. But there is one thing that has been a constant through that time, Mr. Speaker. It has been the hard work of the Cabinet Ministers who sit around this table. And it has been through the hard work of the MPs from the Government benches working on the ground, talking with constituents, connecting them to the helping resources of which this Government has made available, and ensuring that the proposals that the Government of Bermuda has and is thinking about, the Cabinet, is subjected to that scrutiny so that we can make better decisions, Mr. Speaker.

What we have in front of us is not easy. And I know that there are a lot of persons who may be

upset. But here is one thing that I can say, Mr. Speaker. It is better in a pandemic to be too strict and have the ability to relax later, than it is to not be strict enough and have to deal with the consequences, Mr. Speaker. And we are erring on the side of caution because we have seen the impacts that these new and dangerous variants have had on various countries around the world. We see it right now in one of our fellow CARICOM countries, Mr. Speaker, where they are predicting to run out of hospital beds within a week due to the P.1 variant which is spreading in their country.

We have seen what the B117 UK variant has done here. So we must be careful, Mr. Speaker. But at the same point in time that we have to be careful, there is also a great amount of hope. Hope for the future and hope which will be signified by the reopening which is going to start this weekend.

So before I get to a few more comments, I have to state that the attention of the Government since we were here last, has unfortunately been diverted. And the attention has been diverted toward dealing with and tackling this outbreak. However, Mr. Speaker, we have not stopped doing the work to deliver on our promises to the people of this country. We heard the Honourable Member from constituency 19 speak about our Minister of Finance. And despite all of the challenges of which we have faced we have managed to keep our ratings and keep our outlook, Mr. Speaker.

So, despite all the noise which may come, despite the furore, the sound and fury from the Opposition . . . sometimes they say *empty vessels make the most noise*. Despite all of that . . . because you would have heard very succinctly how the Minister of Transportation told the Opposition that what they were saying was complete nonsense, Mr. Speaker. But through all of that we continue to work to deliver.

This Government has delivered in excess of \$75 million of support to individuals, whether it be through unemployment benefits or to businesses, Mr. Speaker—\$75 million of support. The work of which we did last year to streamline Government processes is bearing fruit when you hear the reports from the Deputy Premier speaking about how we are certainly increasing the amount of planning permits and streamlining that process, Mr. Speaker. When you hear the Minister of Transport talk about taking advantage of what we have done with the homeporting initiative, Mr. Speaker, that means that there are things that are happening despite our circumstances.

And the one message that I would like to send to people today, Mr. Speaker, as we close out this first motion to adjourn in the first sitting in this

Honourable House in May, is that there is plenty of time for questioning. And there is plenty of time for persons to make suggestions on how to make things better. But recognise, Mr. Speaker, and understand that at no time—at no time—does this Government make decisions that we do not believe are in the best interest of people—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: So what I would ask is for there to be a sense of unity and a sense of—

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, just a moment.

Minister Dickinson, your microphone is on and I cannot shut you off. I have been trying to shut you off. If you can shut your microphone because we are hearing your conversation; it is bleeding in. Thank you.

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

And so as I say, Mr. Speaker, it is a sense of unity because as we get to the point where we are seeing ourselves beginning to reopen, where we are seeing those vaccination numbers continue to tick up, where we are seeing the local transmission numbers continue to go down, there is an opportunity for us to make sure that we enjoy a good summer, a good tourism season, and return back to our traditions that we have every year. But it is not going to be achieved if we believe that the best way forward is to try to nitpick and play politics at every session, at every time, at every instance, Mr. Speaker, to try to distract and to divide.

Nothing is easy in a once-in-a-century pandemic, Mr. Speaker. There is no playbook for how to handle this stuff. And yes, there are missteps. And yes, we must recover from those missteps. But I promise you, Mr. Speaker, the recovery is better when we realise that together as a country, as a people, we can do better if we are unified and committed to not trying to tear each other down.

So on this, I recognise where we have come from, but I think that, Mr. Speaker, that it is important to recognise that we still have opportunities to make a success of this summer and to make a success of our efforts in rebuilding our economy, in delivering on our economic recovery plan, in making sure that we put people back to work and continue to attract investment as we have been doing thus far.

And so, as I close, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to recognise some people. First, Mr. Speaker, I will touch on a matter that was raised by the Member from constituency 9, who spoke about foster care parents. The Minister of Social Devel-

opment and Seniors said that it is Foster Care Appreciation Month. And I know there are Honourable Members in here and I know there are many people who are listening, who have done that service. And what I want to do is thank all of those persons who are foster parents for the work and the dedication and their sacrifice to this country because it is important. And so I want to certainly recognise them.

Mr. Speaker, there is another group of people who without question need to make sure that they are recognised. And those are the people who during the time of the pandemic have become even more vital and recognised for the work and efforts of which they do. And those, Mr. Speaker, are our teachers. It is Teacher Appreciation Week and I promise you, Mr. Speaker, that all of us who have children of school age who over the last four to six weeks have had to home school our children and have had to try and deal with and balance those things, recognise the amazing work of our teachers and what they do. And to see the transition and the improvements of remote learning of which our teachers have been able to do inside of the public school system, is incredible.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know how challenging that work is and I just want them to know that the Government appreciates their work and appreciates the efforts of which they make.

There is another set of appreciations, Mr. Speaker, which I think is very appropriate for the time in which we are in. Because though it is Teacher Appreciation Week, it is also Nurses Appreciation Week. And we know, Mr. Speaker, the amount of work that our nurses have had to put in. And if you can imagine the nurses who have been at the hospital over this past month, dealing with record numbers, where we topped 40 persons admitted to the hospital with COVID-19 at one point in time, Mr. Speaker, they have gone above and beyond in all of the work of which they have done, whether it is delivering vaccinations, administering testing, contact tracing, doing the epidemiology and surveillance, all the work which has been necessary.

So, on behalf of the Government of Bermuda I just want to recognise the nurses and Nurses Appreciation Week and to state that we value the work of which is being done.

MOTHER'S DAY

Hon. E. David Burt: Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member from constituency 33, in this motion to adjourn, spoke about Mother's Day. It was followed also by the Minister of National Security in giving an ode to mothers.

Mr. Speaker, Sunday is Mother's Day and I am certainly pleased that, like Easter, when we were able to be around our families and mix, that we will be able to in a limited fashion see our families again, and our mothers. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to my mother, to the mother of my children, and to all the mothers out there, wishing them a very happy Mother's Day. It has been an especially trying time this year for families, but especially mothers, as we all have to balance the work of which happens during the pandemic. It is also challenging to think of the mothers who may not be able to see their children as often as they would like to, due to either the nature of the work they are doing during the pandemic and the restrictions on household mixing. And it is so difficult when even talking about grandmothers having to, you know, interact with their children over virtual platforms.

But in saying all of this, Mr. Speaker, we are a strong people and we persevere. And we are strong because of the examples of the strength of our mothers inside of this community. So on behalf of the Government of Bermuda and on behalf of all Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, I certainly wish to extend a happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers in our country and I am grateful that due to the hard work and sacrifice of the last few weeks we will be able to see and share this Mother's Day in a way, in a limited fashion, of which we are used to.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish you a wonderful evening and I look forward to engaging in the House two weeks from today.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Members, before I hit the gavel, being there have been two points that have been raised tonight and I just want to add my remarks too. [One] being Mother's Day this weekend. And as I acknowledge mothers and mothers in my life, my mother and my wife, the mother of my children, and just to wish them a wonderful Mother's Day weekend, as well as all our mothers here on our Island. And let us take that time to make them feel extra special. Not that we should not do this every day, but let's make it extra special on Mother's Day.

And likewise, with Teacher's Appreciation Week, I have to make comment there because the mother of my children is also a teacher.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: And so I acknowledge Teachers Appreciation Week and say how important teachers are to each of us. We would not be where we are if someone had not taken the time to groom and nurture and teach us. So let us uphold our teachers in

the challenging [circumstances] that they are having to teach under and respect that they go above and beyond to make sure that they can give their best and do give their best to our students.

With those remarks, be safe Members, practice proper protocol, and we will be back here in two weeks.

The House stands adjourned. Good evening.

[Gavel]

[At 5:17 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 21 May 2021.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING****21 MAY 2021****10:00 AM***Sitting Number 18 of the 2020/2021 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Members, we are now calling the House to session.

Ms. Beale, would you like to do the prayers at this time for us? Thank you.

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]***CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES***[Minutes of 7 May 2021]*

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, the House is now in session.

The Minutes of the 7th of May have been circulated. Members, are there any amendments, adjustments, corrections that are required?

There are none. The Minutes are confirmed as printed.

*[Minutes of 7 May 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING****APOLOGY**

The Speaker: There is one announcement this morning.

We have been duly informed by the Minister of Transport, Minister Scott, that he will be absent today. And we are just having it duly noted.

Thank you.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There are a host of them, about 12 this morning. The first is in the name of the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

THE BERMUDA PLAN 2018

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Good morning to Members of the House and the listening public.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Plan 2018, the Tribunal Report Draft Bermuda Plan 2018 and zoning maps. Note that the zoning maps can be found on our parliamentary website at an appropriate link: <https://planning.gov.bm/index.php/bermuda-plan-2018/>.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

The next Minister I am going to call on is Minister Wilson.

Minister Wilson, I believe you have most of the remaining [papers]. So, Minister, would you like to present all of yours at this time?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you. Good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY
EXTENSION ORDER 2021****PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY
POWERS) AMENDMENT (NO. 4)
REGULATIONS 2021****PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY
POWERS) AMENDMENT (NO. 5)
REGULATIONS 2021**

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY POWERS) AMENDMENT (NO. 6) REGULATIONS 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY POWERS) (STAY AT HOME) REGULATIONS 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 2) ORDER 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY POWERS) (STAY AT HOME) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY POWERS) (STAY AT HOME) AMENDMENT (NO. 2) REGULATIONS 2021

QUARANTINE (COVID-19) (NO. 3) AMENDMENT ORDER 2021

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19 EMERGENCY POWERS) (PHASED RE-OPENING) REGULATIONS 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the following:

- Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension Order 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) Amendment (No. 4) Regulations 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) Amendment (No. 6) Regulations 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Stay at Home) Regulations 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 2) Order 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Stay at Home) Amendment Regulations 2021;
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Stay at Home) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2021;
 - Quarantine (COVID-19) (No. 3) Amendment Order 2021; and finally,
 - Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Phased Re-opening) Regulations 2021.
- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next paper this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour, Minister Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: We hear you; we do not see you. Now your camera is on, yes. Go ahead.

THE WAGE COMMISSION REPORT 2021: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MINIMUM WAGE IN BERMUDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the [Recommendations for a Minimum Wage in Bermuda](#) report.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are no petitions.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have six Statements this morning. The first Statement this morning, Members, is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to put your Statement?

Hon. E. David Burt: If I may, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You may. Go right ahead.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFEKEY

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to colleagues and the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I am pleased to provide this Honourable House and members of the public with additional details regarding the [SafeKey](#) programme announced on Tuesday. This initiative is part of the Government's effort to allow for more activities and businesses to open safely with reduced risk of coronavirus exposure as we continue our work to eliminate local transmission. It is also in keeping with our efforts to upgrade our coronavirus test and COVID-19 vaccination certificates to ensure that they cannot be forged. With this technology, residents and visitors can begin to enjoy activities and events again that are so important to the cultural fabric of our Island while minimising the risk of any gathering becoming a super-spreader event.

Mr. Speaker, SafeKey is a QR code that will be issued to persons with a negative coronavirus test result or to persons who are fully immunised against COVID-19 through vaccination, which is two weeks after an approved course of a vaccine is completed. SafeKey was designed with privacy in mind and will contain only the information necessary to ensure that it is being used by the person to whom it was issued.

This limited information includes the user's initials, month and day of birth, and the expiry date of the SafeKey. A SafeKey QR code is valid for three days for a negative test result, and until June the 15th for fully immunised persons during the initial rollout phase. As this is a new programme these expiry periods may be adjusted while we learn how best to apply them.

Mr. Speaker, when a SafeKey is presented by the user to a business or establishment, the business can check to ensure it is authentic by going to verify.gov.bm on the web browser of a phone, and scan the QR Code using the camera. This means no special equipment is needed in order to validate that the SafeKey is authentic and not a forgery. Once the SafeKey is confirmed as valid, identification such as a passport or driver's licence must also be checked to ensure the SafeKey is being used by the person to whom it was issued. This ensures that if you lose your SafeKey, it cannot be used by someone else. To further preserve your individual privacy, the SafeKey does not contain information about whether the holder tested negative or if the holder has been immunised.

Mr. Speaker, the QR codes that will now appear on Bermuda's vaccination certificates, test results and SafeKey are developed according to the MIT PathCheck Foundation's Paper Verifiable Credential Standard. Initially they will be verifiable by scanning them via verify.gov.bm on any mobile phone. This programme is built on open-source technology, and this means that any local company or local application developer can write programmes to leverage the SafeKey. I can confirm that the Government engaged a young Bermudian, Mr. Dejae Trott, who participated in the Bermuda Government's coding bootcamp in 2019, to build a mobile application to store SafeKey QR codes on mobile phones. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, there is strong interest from other local technology and event companies who have contacted my office to learn how they can leverage the technology.

Mr. Speaker, negative test results sent by email were upgraded as of yesterday, May the 20th, to include QR codes on the test certificate, and persons were also sent a separate SafeKey. The SafeKey QR codes for immunised persons will be gradually rolled out over the coming weeks with emails containing a link that persons can click to verify their vaccination record details and be issued an upgraded vaccination certificate as well as a SafeKey.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward to the opening of a new luxury hotel this weekend, it is important that we do not forget our tourists who will be visiting Bermuda. Travellers who are not required to quarantine will receive their SafeKey QR codes with their negative tests results. This will ensure that our visitors to the Island can also utilise this technology without needing to do anything extra. Mr. Speaker, SafeKey is not a vaccine passport, as you do not need to get a vaccine in order to be issued the QR code to enjoy

activities. The initial use for SafeKey will be to allow indoor dining to safely begin again and for churches to increase in-person attendance for corporate worship. The public health regulations are currently being amended to change the existing restrictions for indoor dining and churches. Next week we will look to make further amendments to expand the use of SafeKey to gyms and other higher-risk activities.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that though indoor dining is limited to persons with SafeKey at this time, this will not be the case forever. If Bermuda successfully meets the targets for our move to Phase 3 of our reopening, all restaurants will be able to be open for indoor dining for all persons. However, Mr. Speaker, using SafeKey for indoor dining now will allow many businesses to rehire more staff who have been laid off due to the existing restrictions while we continue our collective work as a country to eliminate local transmission. As a country we have sacrificed, and this Government wants to get as many persons back to work as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, a successful initial pilot event was carried out last weekend for an exempted gathering of people. Immunised attendees and persons who were not immunised but tested beforehand were provided a SafeKey QR code. The technology was successfully tested, and SafeKey will be used next week for participants and attendees at the Bermuda Day event at the National Sports Centre, as well as for participants in the Bermuda Day Half Marathon.

With this new technology we can move boldly towards the future and plan for events like the Annual Cup Match Classic, knowing that there is a method to minimise the risk for fans, staff and players. SafeKey is flexible, and due to the fact that it can be read by any mobile phone, it allows individuals to use SafeKey for personal events such as a private party at their home where guests can be asked to share their SafeKey. This can help to minimise the risk of coronavirus exposure and can provide added comfort for important family gatherings.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I must thank the teams who worked behind the scenes to get us to where we are today. I would like to thank the public officers in the Information and Digital Technology Department led by the Chief Information Officer, Mr. Daron Raynor. I would like to thank the team at the Department of Communications, led by the Director, Aderonke Bademosi Wilson, for their work to support the public rollout of this initiative.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. Denis Pitcher, who has given extensive time and effort, and adapted the core technology behind this initiative at no additional cost to the Bermuda Government. While jurisdictions like the State of New York have implemented similar programmes for \$2.5 million, we have implemented best-in-class technology in Bermuda at minimal cost to the taxpayer.

This technology and the applications that will support it will be built in Bermuda, [will be] supported by Bermudians and will yield many benefits for our summer tourism season. Any resident, visitor or app developer, or any Member, Mr. Speaker, who wants to learn more about SafeKey can visit the website: www.gov.bm/safekey to learn more. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is the Government of Bermuda website, www.gov.bm/safekey.

Mr. Speaker, as we utilise this newest tool in our arsenal, we can take confidence from how well Bermuda has applied cutting-edge technology throughout the pandemic. The WeHealth app has helped to notify persons of potential exposure and has helped to manage outbreaks. Our travel authorisation and testing systems have earned praise from residents and visitors alike. And now we will use technology again through the SafeKey programme to stay one step ahead of the coronavirus, to support businesses and to continue our drive to get Bermudians back to work. SafeKey has the potential to be a useful tool to help continue our positive trend towards eliminating local transmission while reopening our economy as this Government moves Bermuda beyond the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

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

Deputy Premier, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning. Go right ahead.

THE FINAL BERMUDA PLAN 2018

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Again, good morning, Mr. Speaker. Today I lay for the consideration and approval the [Final Bermuda Plan 2018](#). The Bermuda Plan [2018] (the Plan) is a development plan prepared by the Department of Planning to guide development for the Island for many years to come. The Plan, which covers the entire Island with the exception of the City of Hamilton, comprises a policy document and zoning maps, and the Tribunal report. Once approved by both Houses, notice of the approval of the Bermuda Plan 2018 will be published in the official *Gazette*.

Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that due to the size of the documents, the Plan can only be accessed electronically. The Planning statement and the Tribunal reports are 200 and 700 pages, respectively. The zoning maps are multi-layered, which can be more instructional to Honourable Members as the layers can be manipulated. I invite members of this Honour-

able House and the public to access the Plan on the Planning Department's website or more specifically by entering the URL <https://planning.gov.bm/index.php/bermuda-plan-2018/>. (Obviously this will be available to the public to see, and they will be able to click quite easily on the website and not be guided by my either misstatement of this URL code . . .)

Mr. Speaker, the Plan 2018 is the product of consultation with the public, key stakeholders, statutory bodies and extensive research. The overarching aim of the Plan is "to effectively manage Bermuda's natural and built environment, resources and development, and to help build healthy, sustainable communities." In support of this aim, the Plan is based on three strategies—a development strategy, a conservation strategy and a community strategy. Mr. Speaker, within the framework of these strategies, the Bermuda Plan 2018 sets out the following five key goals:

1. conserve open space and protect the Island's natural and built heritage;
2. provide sufficient development potential to meet the community's needs;
3. facilitate community improvements in neighbourhoods to create better, healthier and safer places to live and visit;
4. encourage a more efficient and sustainable use and development of land and buildings; and
5. to ensure a high quality of design and accessibility in all new developments.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may recall that the Bermuda Plan 2018 was first released as a draft Plan and was the subject of a three-and-a-half-month public consultation period from the 3rd of December 2018 to the 15th of March 2019. During this consultation period, a total of 457 objections and counter-objections were received.

Mr. Speaker, of the objections, 282 (or 62 per cent) were objections, 161 (35 per cent) were counter-objections and 14 (3 per cent) were representations in support of zonings or policies in the draft Plan. A total of 50 objections were ultimately withdrawn or deemed invalid. Of the remaining 232 objections, 147 (63 per cent) were zoning related. The most common zoning objections involved landowners wanting to remove Agricultural Reserve and Woodland Reserve Conservation Areas from their property. This has been a common theme with objections to previous draft Bermuda Plans and reflects landowners wanting greater development potential for their properties.

Mr. Speaker, on the 10th of January 2020, I appointed the Draft Bermuda Plan 2018 Tribunal [the Tribunal] to hold public inquiries for objections and representations to the Bermuda Plan 2018. Members of the Tribunal were Mr. John Payne (the Chair), Ms. Jennifer Haworth and Mr. Carlos Amaral. Additionally, Mr. Jonathan Starling, Ms. Vanessa Turner and Ms. Quinell Francis were appointed as alternate members.

Mr. Speaker, in the department's processing of the 232 valid objections it was pleasing to note that 52 per cent of them were resolved between the Planning Department's technical officers and the objector. This left the remaining 48 per cent of objections in an unresolved status to be heard by the Tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, the Tribunal commenced in-person public inquiries on 27th of February 2020; however, the inquiries were halted shortly thereafter in response to the health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The department acted as swiftly as possible to amend the Tribunal procedures, which involved holding the hearings virtually and live streaming them from the department's website. A total of 16 Tribunal meetings were held in this manner with the last hearing concluding on the 10th of December 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Draft Bermuda Plan 2018 Tribunal Report, which included the Tribunal's recommendations for each objection along with general remarks, was submitted to me for review and a resolution. Following the completion of my review, this report was finalised to reflect the resolutions of each objection and representation.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Plan 2018 Planning Statement and digital zoning maps reflect the final resolutions for amendments to the draft Bermuda Plan 2018. We will discuss further the resolutions in a more fulsome debate on the 4th of June. I look forward to receiving the input and questions of Honourable Members at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of the Bermuda Plan 2018 cannot be understated. There is a recognised need to provide flexibility within the policy to provide the necessary mechanisms to support development and new investment. This, of course, should not be to the detriment of our natural environment. The work of the department involves assessing the competing interests and is becoming increasingly challenging in today's dynamic environment.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity at this time to thank the members of the Tribunal for their hard work and contributions to the Bermuda Plan 2018. In addition, I would like to recognise the efforts of the Director, Ms. Victoria Pereira, of the Department of Planning and all of her team.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is also in your name, Minister. Would you like to continue with that Statement?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. Thank you very much for allowing me to continue with my next Statement.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING ELECTRICITY RATES

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I rise to take this opportunity to address the Honourable House in order to clarify some elements of the recent reduction in electricity rates by the [Regulatory Authority](#) (the RA). The RA has published their report on the decision and order resulting from their 2021 Electricity Retail Tariff Review, dated 13 May 2021. The new rates, effective on the 1st of June, are lower than those set last year, which are in turn lower than those in 2019. The most dynamic difference is in the lowest tier of use, which started at 15.75 cents per kilowatt-hour, decreased to 12.81 cents in 2020 and has now been set at 12.53 cents. The rate applies to the first 250 kilowatt-hours of use. The second tier, for electricity use of more than 251 kilowatt-hours and up to 700 kilowatt-hours, started at 24 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2019, dropped to 21.72 cents in 2020 and reduced again to 21.24 cents in the new revised tariff.

These are not the only reductions made, Mr. Speaker. The facilities charges (the tariff charged for the fixed costs of bringing electricity to customers) have also decreased by [about] 3.6 per cent from that which was set last year. A customer using 600 kilowatt-hours per month should expect to pay \$143.72 for energy (that is, the kilowatt-hours used) in the months to come, whereas in 2019 they would have paid \$166.33, and up until now \$147.51. I will provide Honourable Members with copies of some tables prepared by the RA to illustrate what the real impact is to an average customer. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, businesses will see a reduction in rates varying between 1.4 [per cent] and 1.8 per cent. This is meaningful in these challenging economic times.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the Honourable House that electricity tariffs can only be changed by the Regulatory Authority regardless of any representations or assertions made by any other party in any other forum. The responsibility of the Minister as defined by the Electricity Act [2016] (the Act) is to provide policy direction when necessary. And I will repeat that sentence so that it is clear the role that the Minister and the Government play.

The responsibility of the Minister as defined by the Electricity Act 2016 is to provide policy direction when necessary. It is worth noting that existing policy, particularly as expressed in section 6 of the Act, specifically states that the RA's duty is in part (and I quote) "to protect the interests of end-users with respect to prices and affordability, and the adequacy, reliability and quality of electricity service . . ." These new rates, resulting from this year's rate review, reflect the purpose and in fact reflect the commitment of the 2020 Speech [from] the Throne. The RA is independent in respect of its processes and its decisions, but like all regulators is bound by the covenant of policy as defined by the Act.

Mr. Speaker, while these reductions are welcome news on the backdrop of an increasingly expensive cost of living, it is vital to recognise the role that fuel costs play in our electricity bills. The RA strives to ensure that those costs are allocated fairly to all customers and that those costs reflect the true costs of fuel. For the avoidance of doubt, Mr. Speaker, the utility makes no profit on the importation of fuel.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, with this step in the right direction for energy costs, it is perhaps more important now than ever to increase our uptake of renewable energy so that fuel costs can be reduced or eliminated. With more renewable energy comes less [use of] fossil fuel, which accounts for a good portion of every electricity bill. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must simultaneously focus on encouraging energy efficiency, which will help control all energy costs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

SALIVA SCREENING PROGRAMME

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

Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise before you and my honourable colleagues to share the plans that have been put in place to implement a [Saliva Screening Regime Programme](#) in our public schools, commencing Monday, May 24th.

Mr. Speaker, having students in school for in-person learning is a priority. Additionally, ensuring that our schools and school environments are safe for staff and students is equally important. In light of this, the school staff are working diligently to keep COVID-19 from spreading in school buildings. Our schools are making tremendous efforts to keep students, staff and by extension our families safe and healthy by implementing safety and health protocols aligned with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other international health organisations. These safety and health protocols provide schools with a daily structure for applying the Government's comprehensive prevention and control measures aimed at protecting staff and students and mitigating and reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the Entry to Exit Safety and Health Protocols for our schools are comprehensive documents and include universal prevention strategies such as the following:

1. morning screenings that include temperature-taking;
2. students and staff wearing face masks;
3. handwashing and sanitising;
4. respiratory etiquette;
5. physical distancing;

6. using cohorts, or bubbles;
7. wearing personal protection equipment (PPE) when necessary;
8. ensuring good ventilation in rooms;
9. cleaning, sanitising and disinfecting rooms and frequently touched surfaces throughout the school day using EPA-approved products; and
10. posting safety and health signs to promote safety and protective measures.

We recognise that the implementation of one safety measure will not work on its own. Therefore, a combined approach of all of these aforementioned prevention strategies will reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and help keep our school environments safe.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the Entry to Exit Safety and Health Protocols created for each school level, the Department of Health has used current research and best practice to develop another layer of safety-specific protocols to reduce the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. These include specific protocols for the following:

- minibuses when transporting students to and from school;
- sitting exams in large rooms;
- field trips; and
- the use of the computer labs.

These protocols drill down and outline explicit practices that staff and students must follow to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 when engaging in these types of activities. As schools make every effort to implement these protocols, the Department of Health has made it very clear that the protocols must be strictly adhered to 100 per cent of the time to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, the EEMC (Education Emergency Measures Committee) met on May the 3rd to discuss the implementation of yet another safety measure—the introduction of a saliva screening strategy for public and private schools. The saliva screening strategy provides a means for identifying and mitigating the risks for exposure of COVID-19 in school buildings. The goal is to use the saliva test as a screen to help break the chains of transmission quickly. The screening strategy will identify persons in our schools who may be COVID-19 positive and asymptomatic. Health officials will then determine the exposure risk and put in place the proper requirements to isolate individuals who have tested positive. The EEMC supported the introduction of the saliva screening programme in schools.

Mr. Speaker, the ability to offer COVID-19 testing at both public and private schools at every level, from preschool to senior school, and at Success Academy and Dame [Marjorie Bean] Hope Academy, is one more tool to help ensure our students can continue in-person learning safely. Bermuda's public and private schools will join other schools around the

world that have implemented saliva screening programmes and have demonstrated that saliva testing in schools is feasible, acceptable and effective. These include some schools in Canada, the United States, France, England and Germany.

Mr. Speaker, our research revealed that for schools to sustain saliva screening programmes, partnerships are required with organisations that can support, oversee and coordinate the programme. The Department of Education has been very fortunate to establish a partnership with the Government's Molecular Diagnostic Lab (MDL). Schools are responsible for ensuring the organisation of staff, students and the facility for testing. At the same time, MDL provides all of the equipment, resources, saliva kits, the schedule and their staff to oversee the testing. This programme would not be possible without the partnership with MDL, and we are indebted to them for their support.

Mr. Speaker, only students who have parental consent will participate. Each school will know in advance when testing will occur at the school so that parents and students are aware. We are also appreciative of MDL for making special testing provisions for students who are in our ASD and Functional Skills programmes and who also attend Dame Hope Academy. Mr. Speaker, the saliva screening programme involves each school organising students into groups, as detailed by the MDL Team, with one group of students from across classes to be tested each week. Testing groups of students each week will provide the Molecular Diagnostic Lab with samples across classrooms, and it will help determine any COVID-19 risks in the school on an ongoing basis. Repeated testing increases the chances of detecting the virus at a moment when new infections are occurring or have just occurred. Dr. Carika Weldon, the Director of the Government's MDL, has also advised us that the saliva tests are as accurate as the nasal pharyngeal tests.

Mr. Speaker, staff who consent to participate in the programme will be scheduled for testing based on the frequency of their interactions with others. For example, a member of staff who interacts with many different students or other staff would be tested each week. Staff members who have contact with only some students and some staff would be tested every two weeks. Lastly, those staff with fewer interactions such as [with only] one class, would be tested once per month.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education sent out information letters to parents and principals that explained the process that must be followed when participating in the programme. On the day students and staff are scheduled for the saliva test, they must not eat, drink or chew gum at least 30 minutes prior to the test. This involves depositing a saliva sample in containers as provided by the MDL with oversight by MDL staff.

Mr. Speaker, once MDL secures the saliva samples, the results are available within 24 hours. The results of the saliva tests are sent to parents and guardians, not to the school principal or the Department of Education. If a positive test is detected, then the result is sent to the individual's physician or GP and must be followed up with a nasal pharyngeal test.

Mr. Speaker, a series of town hall meetings were held with the Department of Education staff, school staff, and parents and guardians the week of May 10. We were also fortunate to have Dr. Carika Weldon and Mr. Tarik Bean-Darrell, MDL's School Saliva Testing Coordinator, on hand to present information about the saliva testing programme and respond to questions. Videos of the sessions have been posted on the Education Department's YouTube Channel.

Mr. Speaker, as previously mentioned, the Ministry also sent letters to parents and guardians about the saliva testing programme via their respective schools. These efforts were undertaken to ensure that parents had various opportunities to receive adequate information to make an informed decision. Mr. Speaker, parents have been sent a link to an electronic consent form which must be completed and returned to the department. As of Wednesday, May 19, a total of 1,863 parents and/or guardians have given consent for their children to participate in the saliva testing programme. We appreciate their support of our efforts to make our schools safer.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry recognises that when children are not in school full-time and engaged in face-to-face learning, this is directly associated with a decline in health, well-being and educational achievement. We intend to do all that we can to keep our students in school with continuous learning until the end of the school term.

The saliva screening programme will enable us to do this by being proactive with the asymptomatic saliva screening, which will add another layer of protection against COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, our school staff are doing an excellent job conducting in-person classes while simultaneously implementing various layers of safety measures in classrooms and schools, which now include the saliva screening programme. This regime will be implemented during the remainder of this school year.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I must emphasise that we need families and the community at large to do their part to keep our children and schools safe for learning. Therefore, it is critically important that we follow public health guidelines, wear a mask, practice good hand hygiene, maintain physical distance and download the WeHealth Bermuda app. Lastly, I encourage everyone to do the research, talk with their doctor and make an informed decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Let us all work together to keep our students, staff and school environments safe

so schools remain open and in-person learning can continue for the remainder of the school year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour. Mr. Hayward, would you like to present your Statement?

THE WAGE COMMISSION REPORT 2021: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MINIMUM WAGE IN BERMUDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, today I laid before this Honourable House the report entitled [Recommendations for a Minimum Wage in Bermuda](#).

Mr. Speaker, the Wage Commission [the Commission] was established by the Employment (Wage Commission) Act 2019 (the Act) based on a recommendation from a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the establishment of a living and minimum wage regime. Its function is to “conduct such studies, reviews and analyses as are necessary . . . and . . . to make recommendations on the minimum hourly wage and the living wage rate to be prescribed by the Minister [of Labour].” The Commission functions as an independent authority. It is chaired by Mr. Cordell Riley and consists of eight members. The Commission is charged with consulting extensively with relevant stakeholders, including representatives of employers and employees, to help determine the effect of a minimum wage on businesses. The Commission will also work with businesses to minimise the shock on any establishment.

Mr. Speaker, according to some reports, studying the impact of a minimum wage on the economy is the most researched topic in all of economics. No matter what side of the debate you are on, you will find many studies to support your viewpoint. The Commission remained focused on its task of recommending a minimum wage for Bermuda with the knowledge that a minimum wage will assist in the following:

1. promoting fair compensation for employees;
2. improving an individual’s quality of life;
3. preventing exploitation of workers; and
4. preventing working families that are below the poverty line from receiving what many would consider to be unliveable wages.

Mr. Speaker, most modern developed countries have a minimum wage regime. More than 90 per cent of the countries designated as International Labour Organization (ILO) member states currently have a statutory wage scheme of some sort. Considerable evidence-based studies have outlined the many benefits realised by both the employers and employees in countries where a minimum wage has been instituted.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that the debate surrounding the introduction of a mandatory

statutory remuneration regime has concluded. With the passage of the Employment (Wage Commission) Act 2019, this debate has been settled and the questions now become *How and when do we implement this regime?* I tabled this report today as part of the Ministry’s efforts to transparently share with the public at the soonest possible opportunity all of the information that has been provided to us. We encourage discussion amongst all of Bermuda on the setting of appropriate rates. Mr. Speaker, the Commission submitted three options for a minimum wage, depending on what is expected to be achieved, as follows:

- Option 1: A minimum wage of \$13.19, which is 42 per cent of the median hourly wage in 2019.
- Option 2: A minimum wage of \$15.71, which is 50 per cent of the median hourly wage. This option is at the threshold of the poverty level, thus setting a wage level that is not below the poverty level.
- Option 3: A minimum wage of \$17.28, which is 55 per cent of the median hourly wage. At this level, the wage is set at the lower bounds of a liveable wage. A minimum wage at this level would pave the way for transition to a liveable wage.

Mr. Speaker, while some have expressed concerns about the production of the Wage Commission’s Report and the publishing of the report in this format, we believed it important for all stakeholders to digest the unabridged report. Businesses can be assured that the Government will take a measured approach as it considers the way forward. Mr. Speaker, any business currently operating with a business model that is predicated on poverty wages should seek to change its business model.

In closing, the Ministry extends sincere thanks to the Commission for its work on this matter and awaits receipt of its second report on a living wage. Following this, the Government will review the recommendations and considerations contained in the reports with the aim to table a Wage Bill in Parliament that will establish a statutory minimum wage in alignment with a living wage regime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The final Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of National Security. Minister Ming, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to beg your indulgence because there have been developments since my Statement was written. And I would just like to add those last two paragraphs at the end if you do not mind.

The Speaker: For clarity?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

The Speaker: There are matters of importance that you would like to highlight at this time that just developed?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: So, Members, we are going to seek your permission, because normally, what is printed is what has to be read. And we are pretty stringent that that is stuck to in normal cases.

Minister, I am looking at the title, which is Hurricane Preparedness, and I have been following the news and the weather today in reference to what potentially is out there. So I am going to take it that your additional comments will be in reference to the current status that has just come up?

Hon. Renee Ming: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: With that clarity, I will allow the additional. But under normal circumstances, it is not done.

So, Minister, continue.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to remind this Honourable House that we are about to enter [hurricane season](#), which runs from June 1st until November 30th. Mr. Speaker, based on records of the last 30 years the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Hurricane Center (NHC) has raised the number from what is considered an average season. The numbers have risen from a yearly average of 12 main storms to 14 main storms, and from six hurricanes to seven hurricanes. The average for major hurricanes classified as a Category 3 or above remains the same, at three.

Mr. Speaker, the 2020 season saw a record-breaking season with 30 named tropical storms, 13 hurricanes and 6 major hurricanes. Bermuda saw Hurricane Paulette strike overnight on the 13th and 14th of September, and Hurricane Teddy strike overnight one week later on the 20th and the 21st of September.

Mr. Speaker, with this said, the early [predictions] for the 2021 are that the season will be even more active than the newer, higher averages. Colorado State University, which is recognised as the world's leader in predictions, have predicted that the early season forecast is 17 main storms, 8 hurricanes, [and] 4 major hurricanes. NOAA, NHC issued their predictions for the 2021 season. The first tropical storm of the 2021 season was announced on May the 10th for the Pacific Coast. Due to climate change, the NHC started its forecast two weeks earlier this year, on May the 15th.

Mr. Speaker, each year the Government begins its preparations for hurricane season in advance of the start of the season. In preparation for the 2021 season, the Emergency Broadcast Facility 100.1 FM has now been fully relocated to the new government tower at Prospect and is broadcasting every day at reduced power. Power will be increased if needed. Honourable Members may recall that the station was used last December during the Island-wide power outage. The public is encouraged to familiarise themselves with the station by tuning in from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Preparedness Week is traditionally held during the first week in June and will run this year from Monday, May 31st until Friday, June the 4th. During Hurricane Preparedness Week, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team, commonly known as DRRM, will coordinate a number of exercises to familiarise staff and train new staff with the Emergency Measures Organisation Operations Centre located at the Hamilton Fire Station. This week will also be used to test equipment and conduct staff training for the Emergency Broadcast Facility (the EBF).

The Emergency Broadcast Facility will test its connections with the Bermuda Weather Service and the Government Facebook Live link. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Broadcast channel will go live each day during lunchtime for 30 minutes with guest speakers for the daily preparedness teams, which are as follows:

- Monday, Personal Safety;
- Tuesday, Family Safety;
- Wednesday, Financial Security;
- Thursday, Strengthen Your Home; and
- Friday, Community and Neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, during this week the EMO will meet on Wednesday, June the 2nd, to ensure planning from each organisation is underway for the 2021 season.

Mr. Speaker, we all understand that it only takes one hurricane to make 2021 an active season for Bermuda. And I urge all residents to be prepared.

- Now is the time to prepare and repair your house for hurricane season.
- Now is the time to look at your family plans and update them with any changes to phone numbers and other important information.
- Now is the time to stock all of your medical prescriptions that your family and pets require and ensure that you have at least two weeks' supply on hand.
- Now is the time to check your hurricane kit to make sure you have working flashlights, a portable radio with spare batteries and a stock of non-perishable food to last your family for seven days.
- Now is the time to ensure your house insurance policy is up to date.

- Now is the time to visit your vulnerable neighbours and ask them if they need any help with their preparations—keeping COVID-19 safety precautions in mind, of course.

Mr. Speaker, several years ago the Department of Communications released their smartphone application called Treefrog. This app will alert all users to news and alerts posted by the Bermuda Government and includes any alerts posted by the Emergency Measures Organisation that the public needs to be urgently aware of. I urge all of this Honourable House and all of Bermuda's residents to sign up for this app, which is free, to ensure that you receive all emergency alerts.

Mr. Speaker, the DRRM team will hold a further EMO meeting for all Emergency Measures Organisation agencies in late August to update the country on the last hurricane season forecast for 2021, which will be published at the beginning of August. Each year during the hurricane season, Bermuda has an opportunity to demonstrate its strength and resilience. I am confident that with proper preparation this year will be no different, and we will safely weather any storms that may test our shores. The DRRM team and the Ministry of National Security will continue to work to ensure that we are well prepared.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the Bermuda Weather Service is in constant communication with the National Hurricane Center in Miami, as there is a non-tropical low-pressure area located about 500 miles east/northeast of Bermuda which is producing winds to storm force and disorganised showers and thunderstorms. We are expecting this storm to pass, to move towards Bermuda over the weekend and bring adverse weather conditions. And it will likely become a subtropical cyclone later today or on Saturday near to the northeast of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team are in constant communication with the Bermuda Weather Service and will be over the weekend in case this storm intensifies, and the Emergency Measures Organisation has to be convened. This is not expected to occur, but Bermuda residents should check the Bermuda Weather Service website during the weekend for the latest updates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Much appreciated.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements for today. We are moving on [with] the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, we have a series of questions today, both written questions and questions from Members regarding Statements that were given this morning. Before I acknowledge the first set of questions, let me just make reference to the last sitting.

During Question Period, the Minister of Works, Minister Burch, made an indication that he would supply additional information in reference to a question that was put. The Minister has supplied that information and it is has been put up on the Share-Point for Members. And that was in reference to the Stimulus Programme contracts.

Thank you, Minister, for following up with that.

Now begins our question time, and you know there are 60 minutes for that. It is now 10:54. We will turn to the written questions. The first written question this morning is in the name of the Opposition Leader and it is to the Minister of Works, Minister Burch.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your written question? You have three questions, and each of them is indicated for an oral response. Opposition Leader.

QUESTION 1: CORRECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN AT NOTORIOUS ACCIDENT BLACKSPOT

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what remedial action and what additional corrective measures the Government intends to take to ensure that the frequent accident spot on the corner of Zuill's Park Road and South Road is safer for all road users?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, would you like to respond?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

Mr. Speaker, my response is [that] this matter was first brought to my attention in June 2020 when I received a petition from the residents of Zuill's Park calling for the removal of a new hedge and fence. The Ministry of Public Works to this point had already applied a number of traffic-calming measures to the junction of Zuill's Park Road and South Road to improve road safety. The key issues are [that] visibility for drivers (on the South Road and those exiting on Zuill's Park Road) is severely limited to the west by a wall and to the east by a fence, a hedge and a BELCO column.

The main problem with this location is that the vehicles on South Road traveling from the west speed up as they travel downhill in an easterly direction, and due to the limited visibility emerging traffic from Zuill's Park will on occasion not see these rather fast-moving vehicles. The circumstances of the accidents provided

by BPS [Bermuda Police Service] indicate this to be the main cause of accidents at this location.

In order to compensate, vehicles turning right to exit Zuill's Park Road watch for both westbound vehicles and then turn very quickly once there is a gap in the eastbound traffic. But because the visibility is severely limited, on occasion the gap they can see is inadequate to allow them to cross the eastbound lane. The accident record also bears this out. Such driving behaviour remains risky and could not be encouraged.

Zuill's Park Road is a private street, and maintenance of safety on the highway for users of this road is the responsibility of the owners of this street. The Minister also has a statutory duty to address road safety issues irrespective of the status of the road. The statutory duty, however, is not a strict duty.

Work carried out so far is as follows:

(1) Sets of rumble strips have been installed on South Road on both approaches to the junction. Some residents are reporting that they have been effective, whilst others feel that they have had no impact. However, observations indicate that these have had a calming effect on traffic, particularly motorcycles on South Road. One resident has also complained about the increase in road noise, which is a known effect of rumble strips.

(2) The rumble strips, however, have been formed with thermoplastics, and under certain adverse weather conditions this material can cause a loss of grip. The plan is to replace the thermoplastic with anti-skid resin when the resources are available. Nevertheless, a judgment was made that on balance the rumble strips improved safety at this junction despite the possible loss of grip.

(3) A pedestrian crossing was installed at the top of the bank near St. Mark's Church not only to provide a safer crossing point, but also to create awareness of the road environment for eastbound drivers on South Road.

(4) A number of road signs warning of the hidden junction on the new crossing were erected again to improve awareness of drivers.

(5) The stop line on Zuill's Park Road has been moved forward to improve visibility of drivers waiting to emerge.

(6) Action markings have been introduced on the west side of Zuill's Park Road to indicate the safest waiting area for vehicles waiting to join South Road.

(7) Three mirrors were installed, one curved and one flat mirror to improve sight of vehicles approaching from the left, and one curved mirror to improve sight of vehicles approaching from the east. Some residents dislike the curved mirrors, as it distorts the reflection of the approaching vehicles. However, the curved mirror provides a wider viewing angle and thus improves the distance of the visibility of approaching vehicles.

(8) Unfortunately, the supplier of the curved mirrors has not supplied the proper fixings, and W&E [Works & Engineering] staff have been making wooden formwork to install these mirrors. That formwork imposes unusual strain upon the glass, causing the mirror to crack. This has been attributed to vandalism in the past, but proper consideration of the pattern of cracks indicates otherwise. New mirrors have been ordered which are more expensive but have the correct fixings. And the additional cost is much less than the cost of labour for making the formwork and replacing broken mirrors.

(9) The landowner of the farmland to the east has given an undertaking to regularly prune his hedge. Several residents contact the Ministry every time the landowner is neglectful of trimming his hedge back; it is not clear if they contact the landowner beforehand.

Further work planned to be carried out:

1. To replace the thermoplastic rumble strips with anti-skid resin to reduce the prospect of bicycles losing grip on South Road. This requires the resin kettle to be repaired in order for the work to be carried out.

2. Replace the broken mirrors. There have been some delays in procurement of the mirrors because of the new supplier that is being used and also due to the disruption due to COVID-19 restrictions.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: No, I am not finished yet, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I was about to call on the Opposition Leader to put a further supplementary.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am trying to turn the phone off. I am trying to get as fulsome an answer as possible over what has taken place over the years.

The Speaker: Continue.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Much appreciated.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Options to resolve the issues for the longer term:

Option 1: Move the wall to the west back by around five feet. This would resolve visibility problems for the eastbound vehicles. However, the cost of this option is likely to be around \$200,000, plus land purchase costs. As the work will be on a private street, the liability for the cost lies with the owners. However, the Minister is able to contribute to some or all of the costs under certain conditions, at his discretion. Nego-

tiations need to be had with the owner of the property on the western side of the junction, as there will be a loss of a sizable portion of his property.

Option 2: To create a new five-foot footpath along the northern side of South Road for the length of the farmland property including underground BELCO cables and removing the column. This would also improve the visibility for the private access onto South Road further to the east of Zuill's Park Road and enable moving the existing bus stop to a more commodious and safer location, enabling passengers to emerge onto a footpath. The budget estimate for the work will be around \$50,000, plus land purchase cost. Preliminary discussions were held with the landowner, and he initially indicated a willingness to negotiate the sale of land required for this footpath. However, some altercation with his neighbours appears to have caused him to change his mind, and he is reportedly no longer willing to sell a strip of his land. Nevertheless, there is provision in legislation for compulsory purchase of land in such situations should the Minister consider it appropriate to do so. Advice is being sought from the Attorney General's Chambers.

Option 3: In order to improve visibility to the east, the BELCO column could be moved or the cables installed underground. The cost for moving a column at another location has been quoted as being \$3,000. But the problem remains as to where it could be moved so that it would not interfere with visibility. A preferred option would be to underground the cables, and this could cost in the region of \$20,000. An easement will need to be negotiated with the landowner of the farm for this action.

Option 4: Negotiated contract between the neighbours to agree a process of trimming back the hedge before requesting the Ministry to intervene in this neighbour dispute.

Option 5: The Minister would be able to instruct the defined visibility splay to the east is maintained clear of obstruction at all times, necessitating the removal of the hedge in the visibility splay area. A normal Bermuda highway standard for visibility splays for development purposes is 8 feet by 120 feet. The landowner has already moved his hedge back to this standard after a request. However, given the higher vehicle speed for this location and the unusual driving behaviour of users of Zuill's Park Road, it may be appropriate to impose a higher standard for this splay. A splay of 15 feet by 150 feet may be more appropriate where actual speeds are up to 40 miles per hour.

To impose this higher standard, it is prudent for the Minister to make a formal decision detailing the reason for this imposition. Also, this option does not address the obstruction caused by the BELCO column, and it is advised that this option should be taken in conjunction with aforementioned option 3, as the argument for keeping the visibility splay clear would apply equally to BELCO.

Considerations: Options 1 and 2 combined would provide the best technical solution overall, but would be very costly at \$250,000 to \$300,000. Option 2 alone solves most of the technical issues and also improves bus passenger facilities and addresses the visibility problem for the access to the east. Although we could try to persuade the landowner, we can use compulsory purchase powers if necessary, and that cost would be \$50,000.

Option 3 is the cheapest solution that has technical merit. Residents may still complain about the hedge regardless, however, for biased reasons—\$3,000 for pole relocation or \$20,000 for underground cables.

Option 4 is aspirational, as the residents have been very antagonistic to one another thus far. It would take much effort, and residents still may be unhappy in the future—zero cost, but huge headache.

Options 5 and 3 combined would be the cheapest option. This would leave the landowner unhappy, but solve the technical issues for the cheapest cost and appease the majority of the residents—\$3,000. Based upon the disposition of the neighbourhood, it is unlikely that any option other than 5 will satisfy them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Opposition Leader, do you have any supplementary questions for this? I cannot hear you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I do, sir.

The Speaker: Okay. Put your supplementary.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: First of all, I would like to thank the Minister for such a thorough response. It is much, much appreciated.

The Speaker: It was thorough, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: He has identified the five options. And I am delighted that some of the thoughts that I had in my mind as to a solution were included in the options. So my question is, When will the Minister be in a position to select the final option, and when will the final option be implemented?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I have not had a final recommendation from the technical officers. Once I do that, I will consider the options and then make a decision. I expect that this will happen within the next month.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplementary or do you want to move on to your next question?

I cannot hear you.

[Pause]

The Speaker: You are still muted.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My next question. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Next question. Thank you. If you would, read the second question so that the Minister and the public can hear it.

QUESTION 2: CORRECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN AT NOTORIOUS ACCIDENT BLACKSPOT

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide an update to this Honourable House as to when the entire remediation plan for this intersection will be made public?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I just provided an update on the background and the considerations I must make before we move forward. So it has just been made public.

The Speaker: As thorough as it was, I agree that it is now public, as well.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I agree. I accept that.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to move on to your third question, Opposition Leader?

QUESTION 3: CORRECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN AT NOTORIOUS ACCIDENT BLACKSPOT

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, please.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House when will the Minister meet with the residents of the Zuill's Park area to share all of the remedial options and invite their input?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I would not be meeting with the residents. Ministry technical officers have already met and then communicated with residents on multiple occasions, and since which the Ministry has received copious amounts of feedback from them. Many disagree with the options offered. This feedback has been compiled to give me a full understanding of the issues. And together with the advice of my technical officers, I have outlined the

course of a remedy in the answer to the first parliamentary question. It remains for us to put the options and costs to the residents of Zuill's Park to see if they can agree a way forward before a recommendation is put to me to make the decision.

Despite all of our efforts, I am mindful that we will never satisfy all of the residents no matter what scheme is decided upon. But I can assure that the decision will be made after considering all options. And as I indicated in the previous question, all of this should occur within the next month.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I have no further questions. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We will now move on to the next written question. And that is in the name of MP Cannonier.

And, Minister Burch, this is for you as well.

MP Cannonier, you have your three questions. Would you like to read your first question? And again, it is indicated for oral response.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. MP Cannonier is outside of the House of Assembly today. And so I have been asked to please read these on his behalf.

The Speaker: Yes, the rules do allow for another Member if the House has been informed that the current Member is absent.

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I have no objection, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Just to verify for myself. MP Jackson, will you read the question?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDIANA BEACH RESORT— PROGRESS UPDATE

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

Will the Honourable Minister (and this is the Honourable Colonel Burch) please provide this Honourable House with an update on the progress of the Bermudiana Beach Resort redevelopment, including the Hilton Franchise Agreement and local/overseas buyers/investors of the units?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, the plan involves converting the existing property into a mid-

market condo hotel with additional leisure facilities which will be operated as a resort under a Hilton franchise.

The condo hotel model is well proven in most islands, but was not feasible in Bermuda until the latest hotel development Act removed earlier real estate ownership restrictions. Condo buyers have only 90 days annual personal occupancy, and the condos are in a hotel rental programme the balance of the year. The nine buildings containing 78 apartments will be converted into 97 units for sale, which with lock-off subdivisions provide 111 hotel keys for rentals.

All of the condos are being refitted with new improved kitchen and bathroom fixtures as befitting a boutique hotel. Additional kitchenettes and bathrooms are being added to facilitate the 111 hotel keys format, and the patios are being added or extended. External elevators are being added to the building exteriors as part of hotel upgrade requirements. Buildings have been painted an attractive range of Bermuda pastel colours. All of the cold- and hot-water supplies have been redesigned on a centralised basis to meet hotel specifications. Electrical and IT systems are being similarly upgraded.

Seven of the existing condo units are to be converted to communal facilities to include a reception area, restaurant, bars, meeting room, spa, gym and back-of-house support areas. Outdoor amenities include two recreational pools, one with an infinity pool design, walking patio areas and dual funicular lifts to the beach below.

Phasing and development schedule: The first phase of redevelopment has commenced, including a full survey of all buildings to identify all infrastructure and building services routing; sidewalks and landscaping on the west end of the site; construction of two elevator towers, one on each of Blocks A and B; fit-out of four model types as show units—a studio, a one-bedroom, a two-bedroom and three-bedroom condos; fit-out of the sales office suite; equipping of four office areas for project management, hotel management and contractors. Furniture for 60 per cent of the condos has been manufactured, paid for and is in the process of shipping. All condo designs have been approved by Hilton. Construction can commence imminently for completion, and an initial hotel opening in 2021/22 subject to debt funding.

Construction works comprise the conversion of four blocks, A, D, F and G; further site works and landscaping; the installation of two additional elevators, one on each of Blocks F and G; conversion and expansion of ground floor units in Block F for the reception area, the restaurant and bar; conversion of units in Block C for back-of-house facilities; construction of the clifftop infinity-edge pool in front of Block F; installation of the first tram on the funicular down to the beach; and completion of initial car park. The intention is for phase 1B conversion works to gain the

finance partially from condo sales, which would accelerate significantly with the phase 1A, hotel opening.

The phase 1B works is 19 condos equivalent to 21 hotel units for rent and can commence from the 1st of November 2021 for completion in June 2022 in time for that year's high season. Phase 1B construction works comprise conversion of two further blocks, B and C; further site works and landscaping; installation of two additional elevators, one on each of Blocks B and C; conversion of ground floor units in Block C for the spa; and an expansion of back-of-house areas; construction of the second pool adjacent to the spa in Block C; and installation of the second tram on the funicular down to the beach; completion of further car park areas. The intention is for phase 2 conversion works to be financed totally from condo sales, which should accelerate again with the phase 1 being larger hotel operations. The phase 2 works adds 36 condos equivalent to 42 hotel units for rent and is likely to commence on the 1st of November 2022 for completion on the 1st of April 2023 in time for that year's high season.

Phase 2 construction works comprise the conversion of three further blocks, E, H and J; further site works and landscaping; installation of three additional elevators, one on each of Blocks E, H and J; the completion of further car park areas; and the supply of the remaining condo furniture.

The project team are the Bermudiana Beach Resort. Redevelopment is in the process of completing the final negotiation for financing the next phase of the redevelopment. The Hilton franchise agreement is completed, and the team is in the process of revamping the sales and marketing programme for the units to take advantage of the extensive Hilton network. The current sales pipeline consists of approximately 200 potential buyers. COVID-19 is delaying site visits to the Island, Americans and Canadians who say they want to view the four show units. Local potential buyers are deterred by perceived delays in the project and the current lack of construction progress onsite.

There is currently one potential purchaser who has placed a deposit for a unit. We believe the current arrangement to secure \$10 million will address the reservation being shown by both the local and overseas investors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Is there a supplementary question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Nothing from me, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary, Opposition Leader.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

You indicated that most of the financing for phases 1 and 2 will be derived from condo sales. Can the Minister confirm what type of commitment has the Government made from a financing point of view? How much will this total development cost the government and people of Bermuda, given that the property is owned by the government and people of Bermuda?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, \$7 million has been spent already. We expect that phase 1A and B will be completed with the proceeds of the \$10 million loan, which is nine-tenths of the way there. We have about 55 items that need to be completed in order for Clarien [Bank] to finally approve the loan. We are halfway there, with the remainder expected to be completed in various stages before the end of the month.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. And so the \$10 million—

The Speaker: The second sup?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

So the \$10 million guarantee that was approved by the House is used to support the Clarien loan?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: No. The \$10 million is the Clarien loan.

The Speaker: Thank you. You used your two supplementaries.

Does anyone else have a supplementary on that question?

There are none.

MP Jackson, before you put the second question, to clarify for Members, Standing Order 17(4) speaks to the ability for another Member to put the questions of the Member who had a written question but was not present in the House at the time. So MP Jackson has been asked by the Member who wrote

the question to put the question, and it is allowed under Standing Order 17(4).

MP Jackson, would you like to put the second question?

QUESTION 2: DANIEL'S HEAD, SITE UPDATE

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House an update on Daniel's Head? This is concerning the leasing of government land to Westover Farm, the marketing of Nine Beaches Resort to both local and foreign developers, or any Bermuda Land Development Corporation redevelopment of the property.

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, in a Ministerial Statement to this House on the 13th of July 2018, I stated that I had recently met with the Bascome brothers to discuss their continued occupation of Westover Farm. I later announced that their lease would be renewed for 21 years less a day from the 1st of May 2019.

The marketing of Nine Beaches Resort ended in December 2019 when the Bermuda Government instructed BLDC [Bermuda Land Development Company] to end its agreement with KPMG for advisory services as related to positioning and marketing of Daniel's Head to an international market. The Government decided that Nine Beaches would be removed from consideration for development and the focus would be on promoting vacant tourism properties. We would explore a technological solution to the smells emanating from Westover Farm first before looking to restart marketing efforts at Nine Beaches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

No supplementaries?

MP Jackson, would you like to put the third question?

QUESTION 3: DANIEL'S HEAD, SITE UPDATE

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the expenditure from January 2018 to present spent on advisory services to market the Daniel's Head site to potential developers? (But that has been answered.)

The Speaker: Have you been able to achieve your answer from the earlier response from the Minister?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, I did.

The Speaker: Minister, the question was answered from your earlier response.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I did not actually give that answer, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I did not think so either.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Oh, I am sorry.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Why don't you go ahead and provide your answer, Minister? Go ahead.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: How much has been paid to KPMG? And the answer to that is \$25,000 for these services.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?
No supplementary.
Thank you, Member; thank you, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The next written question this morning is a question put in the name of MP Jackson to the Minister of Education.

Member, would you like to put your first question to the Minister?

QUESTION 1: DELIVERY OF CHROMEBOOKS, PROGRESS UPDATE

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House an update on the progress and delivery of 1,600 high-tech Chromebooks to support teachers, and primary and middle school students?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, a total of 1,601 Chromebooks were purchased and delivered the week of April 26 through the IT Section of the Department of Education. I am pleased to say that our IT technicians have now completed the configuration of all 1,601 Chromebooks.

These Chromebooks are designated for students at the primary school levels. The department is in the midst of organising summer programmes for students which will integrate the use of the Chromebooks.

In September 2021, we will commence with the rollout of the devices proper to the offer of primary

school students P4, P5 and P6 with the goal of having a device in every student's hands.

The Speaker: Any supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. I am wondering if the Minister would share to the Honourable House the final amount of the cost for the Chromebooks.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, that amount was given in previous Statements on several occasions. I want to say . . . I cannot remember, but I can get an exact figure, but I want to say it was around \$580,000, or between \$560,000 and \$580,000.

The Speaker: Thank you. And you can always indicate that the information is already in the public domain from the previous Statement.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes.

The Speaker: MP, I would refer you to the previous Statements that were given.

Any further supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. I have a supplementary to that.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: So yes. Given the reference to the previous Statement in the public domain, did I understand that this \$580,000-odd was a donation from a foundation in Germany? I am just wondering, what was the procedure for accepting the cash donation into education for the purpose of these Chromebooks?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, Mr. Speaker, that information was revealed last year when we received the donation. And it is in the public domain.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Again, MP, I provide the same response. The Minister has already provided the information in the earlier Statement. And that earlier Statement can be referenced for the correct answer.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a supplemental on that topic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, yes, put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: If we have a benefactor in Bermuda who would like to make a donation, cash donation and not an in-kind donation, a cash donation to support our students in the IT sections and any other section, what is the procedure in place that donors can follow to make a cash donation to support education in Bermuda in the public sector?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Anyone who wishes to make a donation to the Bermuda Public School System is free to contact the Ministry. And, depending on the type of donation, we will sit down and discuss what is the best possible way for that to happen.

The Speaker: Thank you.
No further supplementaries?
No.
MP Jackson, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: REIMBURSEMENT OR STIPEND FOR TEACHERS

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House if the Ministry of Education will provide a stipend or other reimbursement for teachers who use their personal resources to deliver online classes and keep contact with students?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, in order for us to navigate through this pandemic, all of us in Bermuda had to give of ourselves to help our fellow citizens. So with that said, there will be no stipend or other reimbursement given. But I will also preface that with, most teachers have been supplied laptops from the Department of Education. And all teachers have been given full Zoom licences to conduct their classes. In addition to that, during the remote learning phase, whenever we have been on remote learning, all

teachers have been given access to teach from their respective classroom.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No. I do not have any further questions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

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

The Speaker: We will move on to the next series of questions this morning that are written. And those are to the Minister Wayne Furbert from the Opposition Whip, Mr. Richardson.
Opposition Whip, would you like to put your questions?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you and to the listening audience.

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: SHORESIDE FISH PROCESSING PLANT AT MARGINAL WHARF— PROGRESS UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And thank you, Honourable Minister Furbert.

Will the Honourable Minister please update this Honourable House on the progress of the shore-side fish processing plant at Marginal Wharf?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.
Good morning, Mr. Richardson.

BEDC [Bermuda Economic Development Corporation] has formed a steering committee made up of representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Fishermen's Association of Bermuda. This steering committee has updated a previous business plan and design plan for the project based on current economic conditions, as well as taking into account short- to long-term fisheries department or development sectors.

The steering committee has been meeting as a collaborative on this project since March 2021, and it is anticipated that the planning phase of the work will be completed by July 2021.

The committee will subsequently progress the construction phase of the plan in conjunction with implementing a phased approach, the cooperative busi-

ness model, inclusive of all aspects of facility and membership governance.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. What are the—I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: What are those phases within the phased approach starting July 2021?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well, as I mentioned, the first phase is to review and have discussions, and discussions with the Fishermen's Association. And the next phase will be deciding on the construction, which is being worked on right now, the construction of the actual joints being taking place. And the next phase, as we mentioned, will be putting the shovels in the ground if everything goes according to plan.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Yes, Opposition Leader.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Minister. So can you give us an estimated date that you plan to have the shovels in the ground?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: What I will say, Opposition Leader, is that we would like to have it in before this financial year is finishing up, the Government's financial year.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Right.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No more supplementaries to that?

Okay.

Mr. Richardson, MP Richardson, would you like to put your second question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary, sir.

The Speaker: Hold on one second.

You have a supplementary to the first question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, put your question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House if he is aware of any other fish processing plants currently in operation in Bermuda?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No, I am not.

The Speaker: Second supplementary? None? Okay.

Opposition Whip, go ahead and put your second question.

QUESTION 2: SHORESIDE FISH PROCESSING PLANT AT MARGINAL WHARF—CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House which construction company (or construction companies) was contracted to build the shoreside fishing plant at Marginal Wharf?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, no construction companies have been contracted to date.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? None.

Opposition Whip, you can put your third question.

QUESTION 3: SHORESIDE FISH PROCESSING PLANT AT MARGINAL WHARF—DoE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how the preliminary steps required in the Environmental Protection Department's report "A Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Bermuda's Living Marine Resources" [page 21] have been satisfied, and whichever specific White Paper they are using to guide their decision-making and policy implementation?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the [report] "A Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Bermuda's Living Marine Resources" continues to provide guidance to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. However, it must be acknowledged the schedule was written in 2010. And at that time the Department of Environmental Protection was charged with developing a business plan for shoreside facilities' protocols contained in the 2005 White Paper on The Marine Environment and Fishing Industry in Bermuda.

This revised project is now being led by the BEDC (the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation), and they are working closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Fishermen's Association on a new business plan that meets the current and future needs of the fishing industry based on today's context.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Given that some of those required steps outlined in the 2010 report are under consideration, when would we find out what the new considerations are? Or what are the new steps that would be required to be taken after you conduct your consideration/review of the old report?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The department, as I said, Mr. Speaker, the EDD [Economic Development Department] is looking at what was in the report. And as to the Member, we can update them as time goes on. But right now it is just reviewing everything, making sure. But we are working with the Department of Marine Environment and the fishing industry.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: None, Mr. Speaker, from me.

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. Thank you, Ministers.

Members, Ministers, that brings us to a close of the written questions. We have just under 19 minutes left to deal with the questions from Statements that were given today. And each Minister has questions that have been indicated for every Minister who put Statements this morning.

So let us start at the top. Mr. Premier, you have questions this morning from two Members. The Opposition Leader would like to put a question to you this morning referencing your Statement on the Implementation of SafeKey.

Opposition Leader, you can put your question.

QUESTION 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFEKEY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My first question is, Who controls the information and the data stored in this application and the technology used?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, no one controls the information and the data. A SafeKey is simply a QR code that reflects the negative test result or an immunisation status of an individual. And so the important thing to note, Mr. Speaker, is that right now vaccination certificates are issued. Negative test results are issued. Those matters do not contain QR codes. Someone can take a Photoshop of them and, you know, create a forgery. With the addition of the QR codes, the vaccination certificates and also to the negative test results, these things can no longer be forged.

But the QR code only contains the information which is on the certificate itself—the negative test result or the vaccination certificate. That information is part of the Government's database. Once this information is issued, it is put and encoded in an encrypted QR code which can be read or verified at gov.bm. So there is no information that is stored anywhere at all.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, thank you.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Who owns the technology and application?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is no technology or application. As I indicated, this is open-source. For the Opposition Leader again: SafeKey is a QR code, that's all, encoding the information which is held on either a vaccination certificate or a negative test result.

The SafeKey that is issued in addition to the vaccination certificate and a negative test result contains the initials of the individual, the month and day of birth of the individual and expiration date of the QR code itself. And that information is all of the information that is there. It is not stored anywhere. It is sent out to individuals. And individuals can keep it on their phone, they can print it out, they can use it, they can carry it.

And as I indicated in my Statement, we have a young Bermudian who was part of the bootcamp who is developing a Government of Bermuda app to store these matters. But these things are for individuals to control, and it is not centrally controlled.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, my last supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister said that the costs to Bermuda will be minimal to the taxpayer. Can the Premier quantify the cost to the taxpayer in total?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I cannot quantify the costs to the taxpayer in total at this present moment. What I can say is that the technological implementation of the SafeKey itself is . . . as I said, there is a project to upgrade our vaccination certificates so our vaccination certificates cannot be fraudulent.

In regard to the SafeKey, which will be an additional thing issued in addition to the vaccination certificates, this work, as I indicated in my Statement, was provided by Denis Pitcher at no additional charge to the Government of Bermuda. I know that there are lots of people who would like to say that Denis Pitcher is a FinTech consultant to the Government of Bermuda. Mr. Pitcher has been on an unpaid contract, as he [has been] busy with other matters for about the last two to three months. So it was basically provided, the technology, *free of charge* to enable SafeKey.

However, there are some other supplementary expenses such as the marketing information, the videos that DCI prepared and which were internal, and also the contract for the young Bermudian who was part of the bootcamp to develop our mobile app. And I think I will get the information on the dollar value of his hourly contract, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You used up all of your supplementaries. Would you like to put your second question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. That is it for me, Mr. Speaker, on this topic.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Premier, the next Member who has indicated that they have a question for you is MP Famous.

MP Famous, would you like to put your question?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, sir.

And good morning, Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFEKEY

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Premier, may you clarify for me and thousands of other Bermudians? I heard you earlier mention about SafeKey and Cup Match. Will SafeKey allow for domestic cricket to resume safely (no pun intended)?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

One of the most important things to recognise is that, though we are using SafeKey in the early implementation for items such as indoor dining, the long-term view was to have a simple way to verify that individuals would minimise coronavirus risk in the large group settings. So we have a view to look to the future, as was said inside of my Ministerial Statement. We are going to be using this for the Bermuda Day Half Marathon. We are also going to use [this going] into the Bermuda Day events at the National Sports Centre. And it is our intention to use it to support Cup Match this year and to make sure that the annual Cup Match Classic can happen.

The Government of Bermuda continues to work with the clubs, and we are going to make sure that they have clear and early indication that we have the technology in place and we are ready and able to make sure that this event happens and other events happen.

We have done an excellent job in this country. Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent of the people in this country have been vaccinated. Eligible populations being vaccinated is a lot higher. We are continuing the work and the progress. So I think that we are in good stead to make sure that we can claim our summer, and we have technology at our hands to be able to do this. So in short answer, Mr. Speaker, I expect to see the Honourable Member at the St. George's Cricket Club on the last Thursday and Friday before the first Monday in August.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? No supplementary? Thank you.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes . . . no! Whoa! Hello, Mr. Speaker. Sorry I did not press the button.

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Premier. So for clarity, the SafeKey will allow safe entry into large events. So on the note of Cup Match, no one is going to tweet this where we get more people from the West coming in than East, would it?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, SafeKey is equal opportunity, and all persons, whether they have or [have] not been immunised, are able to participate to make sure that we minimise the risk of any large gathering.

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, I thank you for your comment. And I will assist you by saying whether it is one person, or a whole host of people, the Cup will still come down and go back after the game.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Thank you for your question, MP.

The next Minister who has questions this morning is the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, you have a question from the Opposition Leader in reference to your Statement on the Bermuda Plan.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: THE FINAL BERMUDA PLAN 2018

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister provide details on the mitigation strategies that had been included in the Bermuda Plan 2018 that address climate change risk and its impacts on Bermuda, its coasts, its property development and easements, et cetera?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly we can address those matters in great detail when the debate comes on this particular motion. But as a preliminary answer for the Honourable Member, we are actually working on plans to have a coastal study done that will look at some of the issues related to coastal erosion, and perhaps I am straddling into another Ministry, because that is more of an environmental issue, but it also has relevance to planning.

But the mitigation strategies to address climate and coastal reserve zoning are an entire section of the policies [which restrict] development. And as we present the plan at the next possible sitting of the House, those details can be discussed in fullness.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, thank you. That is it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next Statement this morning that requires questions is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, you have two Members who would like to put questions to you. The first is MP Jackson.

MP, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SALIVA SCREENING PROGRAMME

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And good morning again, Minister.

My question is from page 5. There is a reference that "a total of 1,834" students' parents have given consent. And May 20 in the *Bernews* it says that that was 31 per cent of the public school students. And just wondering what is going to happen to the children or the students who do not have to consent for saliva testing?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Speaker, just a slight correction. The number that we see now in the Statement of 1,863 actually represents around 42 per cent. The plea was made on Monday, the date that the Member references. And at that point it was 31 per cent. So we have had more persons sign up since then.

But to answer the Member's question, saliva testing is not mandatory; it is optional. And so we are planning to move ahead with the saliva screening programme with the persons who have indicated that they have given parental consent. We will continue to encourage parental consent, and that option is still open. We are sending home paper consent forms to parents as well. And so if they do consent, then those children will be added to the process.

I would also like to clarify that this is in addition to what has already been in place. What has already been in place has been very effective in keeping our schools open, as we reopened our schools in September. And we have been out for a few weeks per term since we have instituted that. This is just an additional layer, and so it is just helping us to go even further.

And so we encourage our parents to volunteer their children. But if they do not, the programme will still move forward.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No supplementary for me.

The Speaker: Second question? None?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: None.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question to the Minister?

QUESTION 1: SALIVA SCREENING PROGRAMME

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for your Statement.

At page 4 of 6 of your Statement, you indicate that Dr. Weldon has advised the Ministry that the saliva tests are as accurate as the nasal pharyngeal tests. Do you have percentage accuracy numbers for those two categories of tests?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, I do not.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you like a supplementary or a second question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, a supplementary.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Minister, if they are the same calibre of accuracy, why at page 5 of your Statement do you indicate that the follow-up test will be the nasal pharyngeal test? Why do you have to switch test types if the accuracy is the same?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question. You are taking me way beyond my knowledge of how these particular tests do work. But it was always established that when a saliva test triggered a positive, it will be followed up with a nasal pharyngeal test. I can endeavour to get more information on why that is so. But I am assuming that it is a policy of the Department of Health.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. No supplementaries.

The Speaker: Supplementary? None?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No supplementary, Mr. Speaker, no further question.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Labour, the next questions are for you this morning. And there are two Members who have indicated they would like to put questions. The first is from MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: THE WAGE COMMISSION REPORT 2021

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

My first question is, in your Statement to the House you have given three numbers, \$13.19 up to \$17.28. No matter which of those three numbers is ultimately selected, or indeed another number ultimately selected, can you assist the House as to whether this is going to be a gross wage or a net wage in respect of payroll tax and social insurance?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make any assurance to the House what will be the wage rate, whether it will be gross or net. Those will come out when the Ministry of Labour does its deliberations and decides on a methodology, a rate and decides on whether it will be gross or net.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, are we to understand from that answer that these numbers have been established without first considering even if they are gross or net of tax?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, in the report we will share the methodology that was used and the considerations that were given. Those are options. There were recommendations that followed those options that are in the report. And so I cannot speak to the full deliberations of the Wage Commission, as they are an independent body. But certainly when I from a Ministry standpoint have to move forward with determining or deciding on a wage rate, certainly I will have that dialogue with the Wage Commission.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, second supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, Minister, I understand your answer is that at the moment we do not know whether the numbers selected would be a take-home number in someone's pocket or not?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Wage Commission presented options and recommendations within a report. It is now the Minister's responsibility to review those recommendations in alignment with the second report, which is the Living Wage Report, and come to the appropriate rate. Once that appropriate rate is decided, all of the specifics, whether or not it will be net or gross, will be stipulated at that particular time. I think what is important today is that this is simply the Government accepting a report that was produced by the Wage Commission. And no final determination on wage rates or how they will be applied has been made.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question.

The Speaker: You used both of your supplementaries.

Do you have a second question?

QUESTION 2: THE WAGE COMMISSION REPORT 2021

Mr. Scott Pearman: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Still on the same theme. So will the Minister then be recommending one of these three numbers to Cabinet? Is that what happens next?

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Minister in the Statement says that it would wait for the report on the living wage, take into consideration the two wage rates and prescribe a statutory minimum remuneration rate that is in line with the living wage regime.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Can the Minister share with this House when that recommendation will come from the Ministry to Cabinet?

Hon. Jason Hayward: That is dependent on the Wage Commission providing the Ministry with the second report, which is the Living Wage Report. The way in which the Wage Commission Act was actually set out, it sets out in Part 3 that the commission should provide a recommendation on a minimum wage, and in Part 4 should provide a second report on a living wage. We think it is best if we review both reports together to ensure that there is some sort of alignment between statutory minimum remuneration rates and a living wage regime.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Supplementary, second supplementary.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second and final supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Do I understand that answer, Minister, to mean that we will not have a minimum wage until we have a report on a living wage?

Hon. Jason Hayward: I cannot speak to the Member's understanding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, could—

Hon. Jason Hayward: He is asking about his understanding. I simply cannot provide clarity on his understanding.

The Speaker: Yes. Can you put that in a question form, in a question form—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I certainly can.

Minister, will we have a minimum wage before we have the report on a living wage?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, as indicated in my Statement, no.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Minister for his answers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Labour, the next question for you this morning is from the Opposition Whip.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Oh, I think you all hear a bell. And that is our 60 minutes for Question Period come to an end, which brings us to a close of Question Period this morning which started at 10:54. It is now 11:54.

Thank you, Members, for your contributions. And we will now move on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to make a contribution at this time?

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. It sounds like the Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, good morning, everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this House to send out condolences to the family of 27-year-old Kemba Anika Outerbridge. Gone too soon, but she will certainly be missed by her mother, Clarene Butterfield; her father, Blake Outerbridge; her two sisters, Shamarri Asher and Shamari Anika; and numerous other relatives and friends.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also send out condolences to the family of Ms. Delesa Elaine Gal-

lion Smith. She is the mother of Kevin Smith from G.E.T., and his two siblings Roslyn and Junior Clement. I am sure she will be sorely missed by her family.

And also, Mr. Speaker, to the family of Shirmelle Gomes, the daughter of famous gospel singer, Bermuda gospel singer Gary Bean, and Jennifer Bulford.

These folks will certainly be missed by their families and certainly their neighbourhoods.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. I will associate myself if you do not mind to the condolences to the Outerbridge family. I do not know her mother; I know her father, Blake. So my condolences be added to yours.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I heard, I think it was the Attorney General's voice?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes, it is. Thank you.

The Speaker: Madam Attorney General, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: I will not need three minutes, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you and everyone.

I just wanted to associate myself with the remarks with respect to Mr. Smith, as well as the Bulford family. We have them in the constituency in our thoughts and prayers. And to Kevin and Terry and all of the family, we have you close to our hearts and in our prayers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any other Member?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Swan, MP Swan, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I bring condolences on the loss of some dear friends. Mr. Lloyd Van Putten, a former member of the Corporation of St. George's and a closely connected family friend of mine from both Whale Bay and St. George's, that strong connection who has recently passed away. I will miss our communications immensely, and our friendship, which blossomed when I moved to St. George's.

This week, Mr. Speaker, the fragility of life was brought to home because on the fifth hole of St.

George's I saw my opening bat partner. And he reached out and says, *That's my opening bat partner from St. George's!* And we sang *St. George's boys forever*. And five holes later he collapsed, and later that day he died. Larry "Cocky" Steede, the grandson of the great Alec "Cocky" Steede. And he died in Spring Benny community. But he was a St. George's boy forever. And to all of his family and all of his friends I offer my deepest condolences.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Hubert Hughes from Anguilla, my friend, the most fearless Chief Minister and former Opposition Leader of Anguilla, whom I knew personally has recently passed away. His advocacy for independence is mirrored only by his namesake in Bermuda, which I certainly told him about, his cousin David, through our St. Kitts/Anguilla/Nevis connections. And I just want the people of Anguilla to know how much I admired and respected and cherished having known the Honourable Hubert Hughes. May he rest in peace.

And finally, a letter of thank-you to the firefighters in Bermuda, all of the emergency medical people who provide great service even on their days off playing around the golf. We appreciate what they do, and we appreciate that they do it when called upon, which in many cases is not even when they are on duty. May God continue to bless their ministry through service in life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that MP Campbell?

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

The Speaker: De Silva, I am sorry. MP De Silva.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, we do look alike, Mr. Speaker. We have been mistaken for being brothers in the past.

The Speaker: Well, I hear you, but I do not see you. It would be good if we could see you this morning. I saw MP Campbell; that is why I was calling out to MP Campbell.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. I am clicking—there it is.

The Speaker: Okay. Yes, we see you now. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: And, Mr. Speaker, you can see we do look almost identical.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Let me get glasses or I will get confused, right?

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let me help you out.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences for Ms. Delesa Smith, Kevin Smith's mother and Terry Ann's mother-in-law. You will know that she spent much of her time in Jamaica, and it was her wish to get back home to see her family. She must have had some divine intervention, Mr. Speaker, because she was determined to get back here and she did. And of course, she passed within a couple of days of getting back on Island. And I know that her grandchildren and her family will miss her dearly. So I certainly send out my condolences to the family.

I would like to associate with the condolences to [the family of] Larry Steede, Mr. Speaker. I think MP Swan gave a very nice send-off in his remarks. And of course he gave the story about his being at Port Royal earlier this week. And I missed him as well. I had the good fortune of working with him a very long time ago at American International, Mr. Speaker. And he was certainly a character indeed and one whom I will never forget. And my condolences go out to his family.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish my condolences today by giving condolences to the [family of] the late, great Walter J. Seymour from Sunnyside Park, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You can associate yourself; it was done last time. But go ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will associate myself with that. And of course he will be funeralised tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. And of course I had the honour to—

The Speaker: I believe it is Sunday, Sunday.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I mean Sunday, Mr. Speaker.

And I will not be on Island for that, so I am going to miss it. But I am sending a tribute to my good friend, Walter Seymour, Mr. Speaker, who as you know was in his—I think you may have attended, I cannot remember if you attended his 100th birthday. But he was still quite lively when he turned 100, Mr. Speaker. But of course Walter will live with me forever. He endorsed me when I first ran in 2007, Mr. Speaker. And of course I am not going to give anything away to my tribute for the funeral. I will save it for then. But I will miss Walter dearly. He was a good friend, and many of his family members are, too. So I

give all of my sympathy to not only family, but the entire Sunnyside family and Southampton family, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you. You just made it under the bell.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The President: MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I would like to send congratulations to the 79 Bermuda College graduates who received their associate's degrees, diplomas or certificates yesterday in a virtual commencement ceremony. I believe 52 per cent of the Class of 2021 graduated *with honours*, which meant their GPA was between 3.0 and 3.49, or *with distinction* with a GPA of 3.5 to 4.0. So congratulations and well done! And that includes a number of students at the CedarBridge Academy and Berkeley Institute who were enrolled in the dual enrolment programme.

Switching to condolences, I would like to associate myself with the condolences sent out to the family of Mr. Van Putten.

Now switching to sports, I would like to congratulate Jah-Nhai Perinchief at the University of Tennessee who recently won the triple jump in the SEC Outdoor Championships. He is the first Volunteer to do so since 1987, Mr. Speaker. So congratulations to him! He won by 48 centimetres with a leap of 16.89 metres.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like congratulations to go out to the recently announced BFA Legends, Mr. Larry "Cracks" Darrell, who played for Young Men's Social Club, Vasco [Da Gama] and Bermuda. And he is currently on the management team at Young Men's Social Club. Mr. Darrell scored the winning goal in the game in which Bermuda defeated Canada 1–nil at the BAA Stadium. I remember that game quite well.

Ms. Shawnette Perott, who has committed over 30 years to the Western Stars Sports Club, as a player, as a member of the executive and a player in multiple sports—I would add that, not just soccer. And as a player as far as soccer, she was a player, a captain and a coach, winning many individual awards. And as I said, she is involved in the youth programme at Western Stars.

Mr. Quinton Rudolf "Rudy" Minors, a Somerset boy who played in left back in a highly successful Somerset Trojans team that helped establish them—

The Speaker: Yes. Silver City.

Mr. Vance Campbell: —with the nickname of *Silver City*.

The Speaker: Well-earned name.

Mr. Vance Campbell: He also played for the national team. And many would have feared his long throw-in and would have preferred to give a corner kick than to have him throw the ball in from deep in their half.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Member, that bell is tolling for you. Your three minutes have expired. You ended on a good note by talking about that strong Somerset fellow. So that is a good note to end on.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Would any other Member like to make a contribution?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Foggo? Is that your voice?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, MP. You have your three minutes.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would definitely like to be associated with the condolences given for Mr. Lloyd Van Putten, [and] Mr. Larry Steede.

I would also ask that this House recognise condolences for Ms. Madree Nearon, formerly Madree Bean, a well-known St. Georgian who spent the later years of her life in St. David's, was my constituent and also a relative of mine. She passed, I would say, a while back when we were not in the House. But I know that her family is listening, and I want them to know that we have recognised her loss today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give congratulatory remarks to the Bermuda College graduates. They performed during a time when it has been most difficult for any student. And so to be able to get through it and successfully matriculate out of the school to me speaks volumes. And I wish them all much success in their future endeavours as it relates to either education or careers.

And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Foggo.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Deputy Premier, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to be associated with the condolences to the family of Mr. Lloyd Van Putten.

I would also like to offer a condolence message for the family of Ms. Norma T. A. Raynor, a constituent of mine who passed a couple—a number of weeks ago. She is the mother-in-law of a very noted member, Mr. Roderick Burchall. And she was an active member of the Heard Chapel AME Church on the Glebe Road. [Also she] was an outstanding senior member of the Pembroke East community, whom I interacted with quite a bit in my journey thus far as a representative of that area.

I would also like to echo the tribute to all of the Bermuda College grads, but also to all of the graduates of all of the schools in Bermuda for this 2020/21 season who have had to navigate and accomplish their academic and non-academic goals through a very trying COVID-19 period. I think they all as students have perhaps had to deal with an environment like no other (than any of us when we were in their place have had to deal with) to still reach their goals. So tribute should be given to those who have been successful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes. MP Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Tyrrell.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Ah! Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And good morning, colleagues.

The Speaker: You came loud and clear that time.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in the vein of congratulating graduates this year, I would like to send out congratulations to two of my young constituents who have recently graduated. The first one was Zuay Smith. She is actually the daughter of Alaire and Andre Godfrey of Warwick Lane. She graduated from the University of Tampa with a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. And I think she has a bright future ahead of her.

The other young constituent is Hidea Scott Riley, daughter of Shirell Riley of Spice Hill Road. And she graduated magna cum laude from Howard Uni-

versity with a Bachelor of Art and Science, majoring in English and minoring in Photography. So she is another young Bermudian who I think has a good future ahead of her.

While I also have the floor, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say congratulations and happy belated birthday to a very supportive constituent of mine, Ms. Mabel Albouy, who turned 91 recently. And I would be remiss if I did not say Ms. Albouy and her daughter, Deborah, are two of my biggest supporters in representing the constituency, C-26.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Tyrrell.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that MP Ming? Okay. I was trying to catch your voice. MP Ming, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to be associated with the comments for Lloyd Van Putten. Mr. Van Putten, commonly known as “Nip,” was my constituent and one who was definitely a supporter of the Progressive Labour Party. He will truly be missed. He, 1768, driving around St. George’s picking up anybody who needed a ride. I would like his family to know that they are in our thoughts and our prayers at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with the condolence comments for Mr. Larry Steede. These are all St. George’s people, Mr. Speaker, so you can imagine that our community at this time is reeling from [the loss of] these two well-known persons. But we are resilient, and I am sure that we will gather together and support each other during this time.

Mr. Speaker, while we are here in the House this morning, I was unable to attend a virtual promotion ceremony at the Bermuda Police Service. But I would like to send congratulations to the following four officers who have been promoted to the rank of Chief Inspector. They would be Chief Inspector Dennis Astwood, Chief Inspector Peter Stableford, Chief Inspector Sherwin Joseph and Chief Inspector Alex Rowling. We wish them all the best in the next steps of their career with the Bermuda Police Service.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with the condolence comments as well for Madree Nearon. I know her daughter and her family well, and they are in our thoughts and prayers at this time as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Pearman, go right ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, is that Mr. Dunkley? Go right ahead. I am sorry for that.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Thank you, sir.

I would like to join in the congratulations sent to all of the graduates—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Deputy Speaker, you are not talking to me, are you?

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: MP Burgess, we can hear you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Deputy Speaker, your other microphone is on. Hello?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Sorry. I could hear another microphone being on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to be associated with congratulations to all of the graduates certainly of the Bermuda College and high schools, public and private in Bermuda. Certainly during COVID-19, it has been difficult through the educational process. But I think most graduates look forward to the opportunity to have their traditional ceremony. So it is pleasing, I am sure, for them for Members of Parliament to recognise them with their tremendous accomplishment during this difficult period. So I would like to be associated with those congratulations.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, associated with congratulations to Triple Jump Champion for the SEC, Mr. Perinchief, on a fabulous jump. I know the SEC is a great conference in itself. So it is a worthy achievement, and certainly we are excited as Bermudians to recognise that.

I would like to be associated with the congratulations just given by the Honourable Minister for National Security for the four newly promoted Chief Inspectors within the Bermuda Police Service and wish them all the best. And thank you for stepping up to a higher position of leadership, which is well needed within that service, as more and more senior people retire through the years.

And on a sadder note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, condolences to the Smith family on the passing of Deletha Smith recently. I know Kevin quite well, and I know some of the other members of the family. And I

am sure they were pleased to have their mother come back to the Island, as she wanted to have her final moments on the Island. I know they went through quite an ordeal to get her back on the Island. But I am sure she rested in peace, and I wish the family all the comfort and strength that are required during this difficult period.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my final condolence is to the family of Mr. Larry Dennis, former Auditor General of the Government of Bermuda. He served for many, many years. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think Members of the House on both sides had their run-ins at times with this Auditor General, but I believe he served our community very well. And I would like to pass on condolences to his wife and family on his passing just recently. Thank you, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Dunkley.
Any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Opposition Leader Hedley Cole Simons, continue.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to start where Honourable Member Dunkley finished. I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard to the former Auditor General, Larry Dennis. As was said, he was a very tenacious Auditor General. He did not care who it was, he stuck to his principles and he stuck to professionalism. He had many bumpy roads, but that did not deter him. And those are the types of people that we need to provide oversight when it comes to government finances. So I send my condolences to his wife, Nancy, and the rest of his children.

I would like to also associate myself with the comments made in regard to the graduates of Bermuda College and all of the other schools. I mean, as was said earlier, it has been a difficult year academically for all of our students and teachers. And so I would like to send congratulations to all of those students who graduated, be it from primary schools, middle schools or secondary schools and the Bermuda College.

I would like to also associate myself with the comments made regarding Larry "Cocky" Steede. We worked together in international business for many, many years. He was a wise person. He was a very, very good friend. He left international business and started his own business doing maintenance and other things. And he loved golf. So again, my condolences to his family. And he is a personal miss to myself. I was so shocked to see it in today's paper; it just threw me back.

I would like to send congratulatory remarks to a junior equestrian. His name is Cody Rego. He won the championship honours in show jumping in the 2021 Tryon Spring Series in [North Carolina]. I wish

him continued success in his endeavours in his equestrian field, and I am sure that he will be a star going forward. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

The Speaker: Thank you, MP, Opposition Leader.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Furbert.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: MP Furbert, yes.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to take this opportunity to congratulate two constituents of mine, both graduates. Jair Duke, who is the son of Tina and Michael Duke. Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, I hear you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Okay. Jair Duke graduated from Bermuda College, and so we would just like to send congratulations out to Jair Duke, as well as Jada Samuels, who is the daughter of Jah and Devonna Samuels, who graduated from Thomas College with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Entrepreneurship. Also wanting to send my congratulations out to all of the graduates of Bermuda College as well. Just wanting to say *Well done!* to all of the graduates of Bermuda College.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I would like to associate myself with the remarks for the late Mr. Larry Dennis, who was actually one of my constituents from A. P. Owen Road. And also another constituent who passed was Mr. John Moniz of Cloverdale Close, who passed about a month ago.

Also, congratulations to Bermuda College graduates, specifically one of my constituents, Ms.

Serena Simmons of Chaingate Hill; Mr. Ryan Tyrrell, who graduated from Bermuda College as well.

And I also would like to just thank the people of Devonshire for coming together the last few weeks since we have been out of lockdown who helped clean up the area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes.

The Speaker: We hear you, but we do not see you. If you can get your video on, it would be great.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Is it on?

The Speaker: No.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Okay. There you go. You have your three minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Thank you.

I would like to associate myself with the remarks to the graduates of Bermuda College. This has certainly been a very challenging time doing the remote learning, et cetera. And I think they are prepared to move forward in the future to contribute to our country.

I would also like to congratulate Ariana Caines, the daughter of Tina Evans and Glenn Caines, who will be called to the bar—and also I must say the granddaughter of the great Dame Lois Browne-Evans, who will be called to the Bermuda Bar next month. Congratulations! Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to be associated with that as well, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. We will associate the House.

Okay. Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Burch, you have your three minutes.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to be associated with the congratulations to Jah-Nhai Perinchief who is a young man at university in the US and doing very well in triple-jump, also a constituent of mine. I would also like to be associated with the condolences to Lloyd Van Putten, whom I knew very well, and for a number of years, as a strong PLP supporter. I would also like to be associated with the condolences to [the family of] Larry Steede, a very good friend of mine—but [it was] shocking news that came about just earlier this week. We used to work together years ago in reinsurance and stayed in touch over these many years. But a very shocking change.

And then finally, I would like to be associated with the condolences to [the family of] Ms. Deletha Smith, mother of Kevin and mother-in-law of Terry Ann Smith. I think many people know she was a good friend of mine. I have known Ms. Smith for about 30 years. And it was always an interesting and enjoyable engagement with her. She was a straight shooter. You never had to guess where she stood on any issue. She was not reluctant to let her views be known. I saw her I guess about a year ago in Jamaica on one of my trips there. And I was so pleased that they were able to arrange her final wish to come home to pass. And so I offer my condolences to the entire family at this most difficult time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wish to be associated certainly with the condolences out to the family of the late Ms. Deletha Smith, affectionately known as “Ma,” who recently passed away. Ms. Smith moved from Jamaica to Bermuda in her early 20s. She worked many different jobs—cook, cleaner and as a nanny. She also resided in Sunset Pass, Pembroke, on the border of the—it is my constituency and the constituency of the Honourable Member from constituency 19. Certainly my thoughts and prayers are with her son, Mr. Kevin Smith, whom I have worked with closely in my branch, and also her daughter-in-law, Kevin’s wife, Terry Smith. As well as the remainder of her family, Ms. Smith’s grandkids and others. She will certainly be missed by the family. And I know that it was certainly incredibly difficult. But as you have heard from the many tributes which were given today, the affection in which “Ma” was held into and certainly addition to her family.

Mr. Speaker, on a matter for congratulations, I would certainly like to congratulate our Bermuda Col-

lege collegian athlete, Mr. Jah-Nhai Perinchief, for being crowned the Men's Triple Jump Champion of the South Eastern Conference Championships last week and associate myself with the congratulations which have already been given. This was the first—it is an incredible, incredible achievement. When speaking about the fact that he won in a major conference like that, the SEC, I was pleased to wish him well with an email directly to him. But I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, it is an incredible achievement. And he and his family should be incredibly proud.

Mr. Speaker, we have had many congratulations certainly that have been extended to a number of graduates from the Bermuda College. So I just want to be associated with those particular ones, Mr. Speaker. I certainly would like to be associated with the remarks for the CedarBridge students who graduated with dual enrolment honours. That would be Susanna Guerreiro, Shamori Fox, Bryan Hayward-Smith and Richard Mitchell-Minors. And they graduated from Bermuda College Dual Enrolment Programme yesterday at the CedarBridge Academy. So that means when they graduated from CedarBridge, they would have had their associate's degree earned at the same time. And it is a very incredible achievement for them, Mr. Speaker.

So I wish to be associated with the congratulations already issued to all Bermuda College students. And it is good to know, Mr. Speaker, that enrolment is up because this Government has made finances not a barrier for going to Bermuda College.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? Any other Member?

No other Member.

Before I close, just let me add a couple of comments to some of the remarks that have been given already. MP Swan gave condolences to our sister island of Anguilla on the passing of one of their most outstanding MPs. And I would like to join in with those remarks of the MP for that Member of Parliament, Mr. Hughes. If anyone knew him, they knew him for his stance on independence. It was a mark in his feather that he never put down. He stood up strong and stands in regard to that, and he will always be remembered for that.

I would also like to, on a lighter note, give birthday wishes to a constituent of mine, Ms. Mae Smith. And for those who know Mae Smith in Somerset, you would know that she enjoyed her birthday yesterday, and celebrations came from all over. But I single her out today only because last week when we were here, or two weeks ago, we gave condolences [concerning] her husband who had passed. And it is fitting now to give our warm regards and warm remarks to her, having given the sombre remarks last week when we were here.

And on a sad note, as I looked in the paper this morning I saw the passing of a constituent of mine, Ms. Coralie Fox, nee Cross. And I want to give condolences to her family, to her husband Charlie, her son Charles and to her sisters, whose names you will know around certain Chambers here, Ms. Lilymay Bulford, Ms. Rhonda Maskal and Roseanne Paul. I would like to express condolences to you on your loss. I did not realise that she had passed, and I will have my words with the family later on today.

With that said, we are on that 12:30 mark. But before it comes to 12:30, I would just like to go through the other Orders that are here so we get to the Orders of the Day.

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 none.

Members, it is 12:30 now.

Premier, if you would adjourn us now, when we come back we will start on the Orders of the Day, which the first item will be the Fire Safety Amendment [Act 2021].

Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch.

The Speaker: Does any Member object to that?

There are no objections.

The House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:30 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. It is now 2:00 pm and the House is back in session to resume the business for today's sitting.

We broke earlier for the lunch period. At that point we were about to start the Orders of the Day with the first item. However, Members, I am going to seek your indulgence to allow the Deputy Premier to address a matter.

In the earlier session this morning reference was made to the opportunity to debate the Bermuda Plan at the next sitting. However, the item was not tabled to enable us to put that to debate, so, we are going to allow him to put that on the Orders for debate for the next sitting.

With that said, Deputy Premier?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 14

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I appreciate the indulgence of the House on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Standing Order 14 be suspended to enable me to give notice of a Motion.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

No objections, continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 14 suspended.]

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

BERMUDA PLAN 2018

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that at the next day of meeting I propose to move the following motion:

That this Honourable House, in accordance with sections 10 and 11 of the Development and Planning Act 1974, approve the Bermuda Plan 2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. It will appear on the Order Paper at the next sitting where it can be dealt with as an item on that particular day if you choose to pick it up then.

Thank you, Members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: We are now moving on and the first item on the Paper today is the second reading of the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of National Security.

Minister, would you like to present your item at this time?

Hon. Renee Ming: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

BILL

SECOND READING

FIRE SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Renee Ming: I move that the Bill entitled the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House is the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill seeks to amend the Fire Safety Act 2014 (the principal Act) to establish the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) as the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) in relation to the interpretation, application, modification and enforcement of the National Fire Protection Association Codes under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House will be aware that the principal Act provides for the adoption of the NFPA Codes as the standard for fire safety and protection of all buildings and premises in Bermuda. Although it has been commonly accepted that the CFO is the authority on decisions regarding the application of the NFPA Codes, this is not enshrined in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the proposed amendments, the CFO may issue written directions as to compliance and written guidance regarding the interpretation, application or modification of the NFPA Codes and revise any guidance so issued. Additionally, as the AHJ, the CFO shall carry out such consultation as he considers appropriate before issuing or revising any guidance or directions.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will ensure that the CFO is empowered to give direction on the application and interpretation of the NFPA Codes where discrepancies or misunderstanding may arise, thereby ensuring that fire safety and protection in Bermuda is consistent and proficient.

Mr. Speaker, with these introductory remarks I am pleased to commend the Bill entitled the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 to this Honourable House for Honourable Members to discuss.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to colleagues.

I thank the Honourable Minister for her brief and the amendment to the Fire Safety Act 2021 . . . sorry, amends the Fire Safety Act 2014 in this amendment we are dealing with today.

Mr. Speaker, [by] way of a background, the original Fire Safety Act 2014 came under my jurisdiction when I was the Minister of National Security, and it actually had started to be put together under the former PLP Government before the change of governance in the election in 2012. I remember remarking at one time when I brought a Cabinet Paper on the Fire Safety Act 2014 to Cabinet, that, although I had not been around long sitting in Cabinet (it was only about nine months at the time when these papers first started circulating) it appeared that this piece of legislation—the original Act of 2014—was one that had come to Cabinet more than I could ever imagine any other piece of legislation had come in front of Cabinet. And I guess there are many reasons for that. Obviously, we needed to bring our fire safety codes up to a modern standard.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that prevention is just as good as a cure, as they say in health care, but certainly in dealing with emergencies, safety and protection is much better than being able to deal with an emergency when it comes up, because you obviously would like to put that to the side and not have to deal with it.

But the challenge that we faced with the Fire Safety Amendment Act was that we knew there was a need, we knew that we had to balance between providing the emergency service and we knew that that balance was important when it came to safety and protection. But when you look throughout the Island at the buildings we have—some very old, some relatively modern, and then modern buildings—there was a real balance when we enacted legislation to make sure that: (1) it was effective; (2) it was fair; and (3) I guess, that it was not overly costly or burdensome to businesses to meet the requirements. And that is why the original legislation of 2014 took so long to actually get to the floor of the House and be passed.

And now, here we are today in 2021 and the Honourable Minister of the day is bringing an amendment which the Opposition (OBA) has no issue with. We accept that this amendment could be needed for clarification where the Chief Fire Officer will be considered the officer of the . . . having the authority and jurisdiction to deal with matters in regard to the interpretation, application, modification and enforcement. And this just deals with a small part of the 53-page Bill that is the original Bill of 2014. It deals with section 7 of the original Bill. So, we accept that this clarity is not in any way going against the grain of what we are trying to do. It should allow the enforcement of the Fire Safety Amendment Act to be done in a proper way.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I was always concerned about as the Minister was that, while I appreciated that we needed safety and protection, I also always wanted to make sure that we did not become overly bureaucratic in doing it. We wanted to make sure that, as I alluded to earlier in my comments, it did not become too much of a burden on businesses and individuals in conforming to it and so, there were [time allowances] for people to get up to code.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we still have quite a bit of work to do. I look forward to updates from the Minister on where we stand in this regard as far as fire safety concerns. It would probably be helpful for Members of the House as we consider this amendment here today for the Minister to provide some background on just who is in the department, in the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, who deal with fire safety and protection, How big is the department? How many officers are in there and what type of workload they face at the present time, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, let me take this opportunity to thank members of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service for their work, not only through this period of COVID-19, but through the years in their professionalism and in their ability to deal with emergency services. I was immensely proud to be the Minister of National Security and, certainly, as a former volunteer, I have the deepest respect for [the] Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service and the work they do.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments we support this small piece of legislation today. We hope it gives the clarity that the Government believes it will give. And I look forward to the Minister providing some more background on just how big that department is and how big the Minister expects it to be in the near term as they assume more of the responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

And the last question I have for the Honourable Minister is: In light of this amendment and the Fire Safety Act now being part of law since a number of years ago, does the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service believe that they have the budget to deal with the safety and protection under this law that they have to oversee and enforce within our community?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for those comments and I look forward to the Minister's answers and any comments in Committee.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will speak.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have the floor.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Ever so briefly. You know, we live in an ever-changing world. Technology changes. When we are speaking about buildings, spacing, and

the type of infrastructure that you have, [it] requires one to revisit the regulations and codes that are in place. And we know that building codes do change from time to time.

And so, it seems very fitting that, under this legislation, the Fire Chief would be made the point person who has the experience, has the knowledge, to be able to just go ahead and change regulations as it is deemed necessary. And so, it demonstrates that, you know, we are ever trying to be responsive to the current demands that confront those who operate within the Fire Department and it allows, in a very expedient way, the Chief to be able to go out when they do their inspections and the likes to be able to, after seeing first-hand the structure of buildings, keeping in mind various codes that change, then he/she is readily able to then make the requisite changes that will ensure people's safety comes first and foremost.

Mr. Speaker, a few years back I served on the Fire and Safety Committee within the House of Assembly. And it was a very good experience. I would definitely say when we were in the field, I guess, participating in certain behaviours that we were sort of, should have been able to engage in, I would definitely say, Mr. Speaker, I had everybody running out of the yard. Because while I was supposed to be putting the fire out I was actually putting the fire extinguisher fumes on everyone else. So I guess I became the laughingstock that day. I laughed myself. But I say all of that to really speak to the fact that the security and safety of individuals in a building is first and foremost—should be first and foremost—and should always rest in the hands of those who have the skill and the expertise to deliver at the most important hour, should something arise.

And so, with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, this is a good thing that the Minister has done and I have no doubt she will continue to review the legislation and make the requisite amendments to make certain that the legislation is current, is responsive, and aligned with the codes of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

No other?

Minister, would you like to wrap up and move us to Committee?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy Speaker?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:16 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

FIRE SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Ming, you have the floor.

Hon. Renee Ming: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

There are actually three clauses here, can I move them all at the same time?

The Chairman: Yes. Yes, you may.

Hon. Renee Ming: Okay.

Mr. Chairman, the Bill amends the Fire Safety Act 2014 (the Act) to establish an Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) in relation to the interpretation, application, modification, and enforcement of the NFPA Codes under the Act, and to make related amendments.

Clause 1 is the citation. This Act may be cited as the Fire Safety and Protection Amendment Act 2021.

Clause 2 inserts new sections 7A and 7B into the Act. New section 7A establishes, in accordance with the NFPA 1—Fire Code, an AHJ who shall be responsible, for the purposes of the Act, for the enforcement of the NFPA Codes under the Act, and establishes the Chief Fire Officer as the AHJ. New section 7B enables the AHJ to establish written guidance in relation to the interpretation, application or modification of the NFPA Codes and to issue written directions for compliance with the NFPA Codes.

Clause 3 provides that the Bill shall be deemed to have come into operation on 1 January 2018, the same date that the Act came into operation. This clause also provides, for the avoidance of doubt, the exercise or performance of any functions by the Chief Fire Officer as AHJ for the purposes of the Act and in accordance with the NFPA Codes, prior to this Bill coming into operation, shall be deemed to have been validly exercised or performed.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you. I thank the Honourable Minister for the explanation of the three clauses.

The third clause, this is self-explanatory, because obviously the Minister would like that clause to start from the time the Bill actually starts, which is critical to make sure that there is no ambiguity in this whole operation.

Going back to the first, the second clause—the first clause is self-explanatory as well. I just have a couple of observations and a question to the Honourable Minister. So, clause 2 of the amendment we are dealing with today inserts the clause “Authority Having Jurisdiction” after [section] 7 of the original 2014 Act.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to provide some background. The original Act of 2014 says in [section] 6 that [the] Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for fire and safety protection. So, [section] 6(1) says “The Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service shall have overall authority and responsibility with respect to fire safety and protection, and the promotion thereof. . . .”

Mr. Chairman, what that means, because the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service has overall responsibility, it also means that the Chief Fire Officer, as the leader of that organisation, is the one who provides the direction, the guidance, and the input.

So, what we are doing today—inserting this clause with the AHJ—is just providing any clarity that is necessary. Because, as the Minister said in her brief . . . someone has got their microphone on, Mr. Chairman, and there is a lot of noise.

The Chairman: Yes. I really do not know who it is from my end.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: It seems to be cleared up now, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: So, Mr. Chairman, what the Minister did say in the brief [is] that it is commonly accepted that the CFO is the officer having jurisdiction. So, section 6 (originally covered in the Act) and this [new] section 7A provides more clarity, if the clarity is required. And that is just a background for Members of Parliament and for people listening.

The question I have to the Honourable Minister is on clause 2, [new] section 7B, which says the “AHJ may issue directions or guidance in relation to the NFPA Codes.” So, the question to the Honourable Minister is, going back to the principal Act, the Fire Safety Act 2014, section 8[(1)] says the “Minister may issue supplemental fire safety codes. . . .”

So, the question to the Honourable Minister is, how will this new section 7B that we are putting into this Act work in tandem with the section 8 in the original Act? How does the Minister expect those two—the

change—to meld with what is already in the Fire Safety Act? Because, from what the Minister has said today the Chief Fire Officer can “issue written guidance regarding the interpretation”—that is section 7B[(1)](a)—provide “application or modification of the NFPA Codes, and revise any guidance so issued.”

But the Minister, in the original Act in section 8, also has the ability to issue supplemental fire codes. So, how can we ensure that they are going to work together for seamless enforcement and oversight of this Fire Safety Amendment Act? That is the only question I have, and I think it is important based on how the amendment is written and how the original Act remains written in Part 2, section 8.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member. Are there any further speakers? Minister?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Chairman, I believe there was only one question from my colleague—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Renee Ming: —and that spoke to how will section 7B work with section 8 of the Fire Safety Act 2014.

And what I would like to do is . . . the amendment is clear in terms of the role of the Fire Chief—Chief Fire Officer—and the AHJ (which is the authority within the jurisdiction), but in section 8 it says, as well, that “In preparing” (this is section 8(2) of the Fire Safety Act 2014) “In preparing and issuing any fire safety codes under this section, the Minister shall act on the advice of the Chief Fire Officer who shall consult as he considers appropriate” and it goes on to explain it.

So, I think that the question that the Member asked has been answered in the actual section 8 of the Act.

The Chairman: Okay. Mr. Dunkley, are you satisfied with that?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I appreciate the explanation, Mr. Chairman, but I understand that in preparing and issuing any fire safety codes under section 8 the Minister shall act on the advice of the Chief Fire Officer.

Now, going back to the amendment we are making today, section 7B[(1)](a), is that “advice”—that section 8, the Chief Fire Officer “issuing written guidance regarding the interpretation, application or modification” of these codes? Because the Minister, in the original Act, has to act on the advice, but in this amendment we are allowing the Chief Fire Officer as the AHJ to actually issue the guidance. So, is the ability to do that taken out of the Minister’s hands com-

pletely and now all [decisions are] with the Chief Fire Officer? That is, I guess, the crux of the question.

Because it appears that is so because the original Act—repeating myself for clarity—says—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —that the Minister must act on the advice of the Chief Fire Officer; but now we are giving the Chief Fire Officer the ability to actually revise the codes. It does not mention the Minister in this amendment.

The Chairman: Hmm.

Minister, do you have that?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that was the intention that the Chief Fire Officer becomes the AHJ, which is the [Authority Having] Jurisdiction. So, whilst the Minister still has the . . . “may issue supplementary fire safety codes,” the Chief Fire Officer now is the Authority Having Jurisdiction within the amendment and that will be added into the Act as part of the Act.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Renee Ming: If that is . . . I am not sure if that is what you are referring to because that is actually where . . . the Authority Having Jurisdiction. So, that is the AHJ and that role is now affixed to the Chief Fire Officer.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: That is what I was assuming. That is why I have questioned section 8.

So, if that is the case, why is section 8 not amended to make it clear that the Minister has no real authority in this matter? Because if it falls with the Chief Fire Officer as the AHJ, the Minister has no authority.

Hon. Renee Ming: Well, I would not say that . . . sorry, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes, go right ahead.

Hon. Renee Ming: Okay.

The Act is clear in that it still says that in section 8(1)—and you are referring to the Fire Safety Act 2014—that “The Minister may issue supplementary fire safety codes that are essential to take account of the operational requirements of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Services and which relate to matters which are not specifically provided for by the NFPA Codes.”

So, when you look at this amendment here in front of us, it speaks specifically to the NFPA Codes and the section 8 . . . I think you are looking at it as . . . in the inference of the NFPA Codes, but section 8

speaks to [matters] that are not specifically provided for.

So, I see where you are . . . I can see your confusion in it, but I think the Act actually clearly explains it there.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I accept where you are coming from, but I still have some difference because in section 8(2) it says, “In preparing and issuing any fire safety codes under this section, the Minister shall . . .”—so it refers to the codes right there.

Mr. Chairman, I do not need to belabour the point. I am just making sure that we have clarity because this—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 is bringing clarity to these codes, which are important. And so, I just want to question that to make sure that if the Chief Fire Officer is the AHJ, that this is clear, and the Minister’s responsibilities are very well defined and we do not have to come back and make further amendments.

So, the point has been made. And I do not think there is any need to belabour it anymore. I appreciate the Minister’s explanations.

The Chairman: Any further questions?

Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister, do you want to move these clauses?

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely, Mr. Chairman.

I move that clauses 1, 2 and 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1, 2 and 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

The Chairman: We will do the preamble now.

Hon. Renee Ming: I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The preamble is approved.

Hon. Renee Ming: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as presented or amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed and amended.

Any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House.

[Motion carried: The Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you Honourable Minister.
Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 2:29 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

FIRE SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. The Bill has been reported as printed and received.

That now brings us on to the next item on the Order Paper for today, [Order] No. 2, which is the second reading of the Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister, are you ready to present your matter?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue on.

BILL

SECOND READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment [Act] 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Government wishes this Honourable House to now give con-

sideration to the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 was a very challenging year for countries around the world. The unexpected onset of the pandemic and the fallout from that has had a devastating impact on people and on economies. Bermuda, like other countries globally, has had to deal with serious health and economic challenges. A number of critical actions were taken to protect and preserve life and then to provide economic support for the people of Bermuda. Government revenues dropped significantly and the unexpected expenditure [INAUDIBLE] reached . . . Government therefore stepped up and took prudent and considered action to address the expected significant deficit.

Mr. Speaker, we were fortunate that in this crisis Bermudians and residents of Bermuda came together and worked together for the common good. Thus, Government was able to negotiate with some of its union partners in the public sector and reach an agreement on a package of austerity measures aimed at reducing expenditure in the short term, while at the same time ensuring that public service employees were not negatively impacted from a financial point of view.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Public Services Union, the Bermuda Industrial Union, and the Bermuda Union of Teachers all agreed to a list of measures which included: a reduction of 10 per cent of all salaries and wages for one year, or until the 31 July 2021, and [until] the 31 August [2021] for teachers and principals; a suspension of Public Service Superannuation Fund contributions by the employee and the Government for one year or until 31 July 2021.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on 17 July 2020, the Legislature passed the Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2020. The purpose of the Temporary PSSA [Public Service Superannuation Act] was to provide for a one-year temporary suspension of the Government's contributions to the Public Service Superannuation Fund [PSSF] and an optional one-year temporary suspension of a contributor's contributions to the PSSF.

Mr. Speaker, the Temporary PSSA has a pre-defined suspension period with a suspension period defining specific dates of when contributions can be suspended from the PSSF. The PSSA defined the suspension period as 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. And for persons that fall within the category of teacher, from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021.

Mr. Speaker, the suspension period was initially instituted with the expectation that all government unions would reach agreement on the suspending of PSSF contributions at the same time. However, the negotiation process has been more extended with some of the unions. As a result, the government employees in those unions—this includes the police officers of all ranks, superintendent and above, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and the Commis-

sioner of Police and Magistrates—will complete their 12-month suspension period after the pre-defined end date of the suspension period of the Act. The group of employees that have not started as yet are still a work in progress, but the date on which an agreement is made is still to be determined.

Mr. Speaker, to avoid having to make multiple amendments of the Temporary PSSA to allow for different suspension periods each time the Government negotiates with the remainder of its union partners, the Act will be amended to allow for modification of suspension periods by order subject to the negative resolution procedure, and that such order may be made with retrospective effect.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that the decision to suspend contributions to the PSSF was not taken lightly and, as noted previously, came on the back of a pandemic that had a negative impact on the global economy with the Government experiencing a major decline in tax revenue and, at the same time, needing to increase its expenditure in order to safeguard the health of Bermuda and its residents. The agreement to suspend contributions helped the Government to avoid mass lay-offs, or forced early retirement within the public service, and helped to save the taxpayers millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to take this opportunity, once again, to thank our union partners and, by extension, our dedicated public service officers for their active engagement and willingness to work with us in the best interests of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to begin by stating that the Opposition realises that this is something that has to be done and not something that we would like to have done.

As we all know, and as the Minister of Finance has indicated, we faced a challenge economically prior to the pandemic and the pandemic has exacerbated the economic challenge that we all face, whether we are an individual employee, whether we are a business, or whether in fact we are a government. The truth of the matter that is everybody in the economy has suffered. We have seen our salaries reduced, we have seen our incomes reduced, we have seen people laid off, and we have seen some really, really tough times with our brothers and sisters. So, I understand that we have to make some tough decisions to get through this situation which we find ourselves in.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to first state that we support this endeavour and, in essence, with the suspension of the contributions—be they voluntarily or not—we are funding today by borrowing from our future. We are using our own money that we had put aside for a rainy day to cover our living expenses for today in some cases. And I know it is difficult and I also know that a number of people would prefer not to borrow from their pensions, but had no choice to do otherwise.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, when we borrow from our pensions, we are not just taking out capital, we are also taking out potential earnings that enure to our benefit over a life of our contributions to our pensions. And at the end of the day, when it comes to our pensions, what you put in is what you get out. So, if you reduce your contributions, if you make withdrawals from your contributions, your benefits when you are ready to retire are diminished accordingly. And so, at the end of the day, this challenges us in the immediate term and also in the long term. We not only lose our contributions, but we lose the earning power of our contributions, and I think this needs to be made clear as well.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue is when we put through the legislation last year, the Minister of Finance had indicated that he was doing an actuarial review on the pension plans—the government pension plans—and he gave an indication that the actuarial review would be completed by the end of July 2020. I would invite the Minister to give an update on where things stand on the actuarial studies and their findings in regard to the liquidity and sustainability of our pension plans.

I think one of the pension plans that I read indicated that, if we did not make a contribution, the plan would last for another 10 years. Given where we are this year it would be interesting to see what assessment the actuaries will make given that we have withdrawn funds from our pensions, and because we withdrew funds with the \$12,000 which is not a government pension, but the principle is the same, if we are not making contributions then it just compromises the income and it compromises the ability of the fund to meet its liquidity requirements.

As I said, Bermuda was [having] challenging economic times before. We were on a glide path of reduced tourism. People were leaving Bermuda because they were facing challenges. And so, we should have had a recovery plan then, but that is history and it is easy to say. And I see that the Minister has a recovery plan which will be debated sometime in the future.

The other reason that I think we had to do it was to basically address money in circulation. If we are to grow our economy, if we are to get people back to work, the incentive for Government was to release some of the pension money to its participants so that they can spend money in the community and, as a

result, bring some liquidity and growth to our economy. So, it is an interesting dilemma in regard to suspension of contributions because it touches the entire fabric of Bermuda's economy.

As I said, I do not have a lot to say. We support it and on that . . . oh, I know. The Minister indicated that on occasion—and the legislation states “on occasion”—the Minister will have the discretion to add members or certain classes of members to the suspension of contributions. When he does his summary, I would like for him to repeat what he said because I did not have a clear sense.

I was trying to determine whether he meant where they have employees in government who have not agreed to the suspension of their contributions or have not agreed to the collective bargaining agreement that is crafted by the unions, that their suspension has been tabled for now and will be presented [again] in regard to this legislation when agreement is reached. So, can the Minister just clarify this because I am not very clear as to how one qualifies to have a suspension within the government sector as well as the contributory pension sector in the next legislation?

So, with those few comments, that is all I have to say at this point in time, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Adams, you have the floor.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. As the Minister articulated, this is simply a measure to avoid making multiple amendments to the Temporary PSSA. The Government recognises that the negotiations to suspend contributions to the PSSF with some union partners took longer than originally anticipated and that some are, in fact, still ongoing. As a result, the beginning and ending dates are different. So, Mr. Speaker, I am naturally supportive of the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I, too, would like to take this opportunity to thank our union partners and public officers for their sacrifice. It goes without saying COVID-19 has resulted in a loss of government revenue, increasing expenditure, and ultimately, an increase in our national debt. And it was their sacrifice that assisted in providing the Government additional capacity to work through the economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, it is not lost on us that our public officers provide critical services on a daily basis to enhance the lives of everyday Bermudians, that many have gone above and beyond having been asked to do more with less and that the added pressure has had an impact to their everyday lives.

Mr. Speaker, it is for reasons such as those that this Government's agenda is now to put policies in place that will have us move past the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish by simply saying that the sacrifices of our union partners and public officers, once again, demonstrate their commitment to each other and our country and they have not gone unnoticed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Pearman—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like the last speaker, I will be very brief.

As the Opposition Leader has already informed this Honourable House, we do not oppose this Act or this Bill. Nonetheless, we recognise that it is regrettable, because what we are doing in practice and in practicality is suspending payments into pension money and pension money is that pot for rainy days. We all recognise right now that it is raining and, therefore, there has been legitimate consideration and focus as to whether or not pension money should be released or releasable or suspended, et cetera, to allow for the trouble that is being faced on a global basis in respect of COVID-19. But nonetheless, that which is spent today is unlikely to be there tomorrow.

It is always helpful when these sorts of Bills come through just to remind ourselves what the Bill is actually doing. This Bill, as the Honourable Minister of Finance explained, is really very, very narrow. The previous Bill dealt with various periods of suspension, and it had two periods of suspension. This Bill is introducing a third period, which period is at the discretion of the Minister. And it, therefore, allows for suspensions now that did not happen before.

The questions I have, therefore, are two. The Minister of Finance explained how the previous periods were general in the first instance and specific to teachers in the second, so my first question is this to the Honourable Minister of Finance: What are the categories that this new discretionary flexible period will allow for suspensions? Is it police and fire only, as he described? Or does it apply to anyone else? So, we know it applies to the police and fire because he said so. Does it apply to anyone else?

My second and final question for the Honourable Minister of Finance is this: This Bill allows the

setting of a period on a retrospective basis. It goes back in time if the Minister wishes. He has the power to go back in time and suspend for a period in the past. And my second and final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the extent to which he will exercise that retrospective power, will he be going back or not? I think he was commenting on that when he addressed the Bill in the beginning, but I am afraid I just missed that point. Will he be applying this retrospectively against the police, the fire, or indeed, any other category that he identifies in respect of my first question?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me that brief moment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

No other Member?

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Honourable Members for their contributions and for the opportunity to provide some clarifying comments on areas that may be a bit confusing.

By way of background, the Government entered into discussions and negotiations with all the public service unions and associations. They would include the BPSU, the BIU, the BUT, the Bermuda Police Association, the Fire [Service] Association, as well as the Prison Officers Association. While we would have liked for those negotiations all to have concluded with all parties agreeing to participate in this programme, it did not end that way. And two unions, in particular, did not—the Prison Officers Association and the Fire Service Association.

Discussions with the police organisation took a bit longer, so their commencement date, because this programme was intended to be for 12 months in duration . . . so the concern expressed around the dates and the retrospective nature of this amendment, let me allay those concerns by saying this. Inasmuch as a union commenced the austerity programme after July 1st, let us say it is August 1st, their end date would be 12 months from commencement.

The retrospective nature of the Bill is intended to capture the start date, which may not have been when the legislation was originally contemplated. And so, you will see in experience that actual start dates will be varied for each particular union and this legislation is intended to allow for the suspensions to occur for that period of time for which the 12 months is running.

We have not had agreements with the Prison Officers Association or the Fire Services Association. This legislation, in some ways, is a bit optimistic and is hopeful that, like their other colleagues in the public service who participated in the austerity measures, that they will see fit to do so as well. So it contem-

plates that inasmuch as they do agree we can provide for their suspensions without having to come back and amend the legislation.

I think that there might have been some confusion, especially for the general public, with respect to some of the comments made by the Honourable Opposition Leader. This amendment relates only to the Public Service Superannuation Fund, the defined benefit plan for public service officers. It does not relate to private sector plans or defined contribution plans. And so, there have been no monies taken out of this plan. There has been in effect a suspension of the contributions.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Any objections?

None?

Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:53 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 3.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends the definition of “suspension period” in section 2 of the principal Act, to allow for different suspension periods of 12 months to be specified by order made by the Minister of Finance in relation to specified categories of contributors, and such orders shall be made subject to the negative resolution procedure and may be made with retrospective effect.

Clause 3 provides for retrospective commencement of this Act on July 27, 2020, the date on which the Temporary PSSA came into effect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, just one question.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And I would like to speak to [new section] 2(1)(c) based on comments the Minister made during his presentation.

The Chairman: Continue, Honourable Leader of the Opposition Cole Hedley Simons.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is this: He indicated that he has not reached an agreement with the Bermuda Police Union. If the Bermuda Police Union—

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, the Police Union . . . Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes, continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The Police Union are among the parties who have agreed. It is the prison officers and the fire officers who have not.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay, so, if the Prison Officers and the Fire Officers agree today, then you have the discretion to give them a suspension as of May 21, 2021 to December 31, 2021? So that could be effective today given the changing circumstances of our economy in regard to the impact of COVID-19. And that is the question I have.

So, our economy is evolving continuously and the longer we go down the road economically we may strengthen and you may find yourself in a position that these two entities—the Prison Officers and the Fire Officers—are not required to make their contribution because of the strengthening of our economy. But if it is required, you do not have to give them a year's suspension, you can give them whatever you deem fit given the evolution of our economy.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?
Minister?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Chairman, MP Pearman.

The Chairman: MP Pearman, continue, I am sorry.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, just to follow up on something from the debate, but in respect of the [new section] 2(1)(c) that is being inserted into the Bill, my question is this: It says, "such other periods of twelve months as may be so specified." And so, I guess, my

question is this, as I understood what you were saying, the suspension periods for the various job categories will not necessarily align by their dates, but the suspension periods will be the same length of 12 months. Is that correct or have I misunderstood?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, the suspension periods will be for 12 months in duration, so—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Across the board.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Across the board.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further questions or comments?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure . . . I am hopeful that that response answered the question put forth by the Opposition Leader, but if it is not, then I—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Just a question. And so, I heard what you said and, as you can see, our management of COVID-19 is becoming more positive and the economy is beginning to open. And it may not be necessary to suspend the contributions for the members in question for 12 months because we may have a more robust economy by December. So, the question becomes, why hamstring yourself to a year if you can only be required to do it, given our economic improvement, for six months? That is my question.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I will respond to that by saying that the answer is rooted in a concept of equity. And so, the other public officers—those from the BPSU, the BIU, the BUT and the Police Association—have all agreed to suspend their contributions for a period of 12 months. And in the spirit of them taking a reduction in their benefits, it is my view that they would probably ask for the same kind of sacrifice from their colleagues in the Prison Service and in the Fire Service.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay, I accept that.

The Chairman: Any further comments?
There appear to be none.
Minister?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: Do the clauses first.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

The Chairman: Now you can do the preamble.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. 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 appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:00 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported as printed and received.

We now move on to the next item on the Order Paper, which is the second reading of the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021, again, in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Government wishes this Honourable House to now give consideration to the Bill entitled the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, as previously noted, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on countries and their residents around the globe. Bermuda, like other countries globally, has had to deal with the serious health and economic challenges. The Bermuda Government, therefore, had to take prompt and decisive action to protect the health of its residents and to provide support to navigate significant challenges.

The Government also developed and implemented an unemployment benefit allowing for persons to withdraw funds from their pensions and progressed other initiatives to provide residents with additional income. Businesses were also given consideration and actions were also taken to help them navigate the challenging waters.

One key initiative, which was progressed to provide benefits to both businesses and individuals, related to social insurance payments. Thus, on the 19th of June 2020 the Legislature passed the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2020 (or the Temporary CPA).

The purpose of the Temporary CPA was to provide for a one-year temporary suspension of contributions to the Contributory Pension Fund with the aim of providing assistance to businesses, employees and the Government due to the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Bermuda's economy.

Mr. Speaker, on the back of the passing of the Temporary CPA the Government negotiated with some of its union partners and reached an agreement on a package of measures aimed at reducing expenditures in the short term. Bermuda Public Services Union, the Bermuda Industrial Union, and the Bermuda Union of Teachers agreed to a list of measures which included a suspension of Contributory Pension Fund contributions by the employee and the Government in respect of a defined suspension period.

Mr. Speaker, the Temporary CPA has a suspension period with the suspension period defining

specific dates when contributions can be suspended from the CPF [Contributory Pension Fund]. In particular, the Temporary CPA defines the suspension period as July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, it was originally anticipated that all government unions would come to an agreement on the suspending of CPF contributions at the same time. However, the negotiations were concluded at different time periods and for some groups of employees—police officers of the rank of Superintendent and above, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of Police and Magistrates—negotiations are still ongoing. As a result, the government employees in some unions will complete their 12-month suspension period after the predefined end date of the suspension period of the Temporary CPA.

Mr. Speaker, to avoid having to make multiple amendments to the Temporary CPA to be able to appropriately reflect these extended time periods, the Temporary CPA will be amended to allow for modification of the suspension periods by order subject to the negative resolution procedure and that such orders may be made with retrospective effect.

Mr. Speaker, the Contributory Pension Fund has served the citizens of Bermuda well during the 50 years that it has been in existence by providing an important base retirement income. Government has been consistent in taking steps to encourage contributions to maximise future income streams. However, given the unprecedented tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted earlier, Government has responded with creativity and decisiveness to offer relief to those negatively impacted by this global disaster. The deferment in CPF contributions has helped keep people employed, businesses afloat, and helped the Government to prudently control expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to, again, take this opportunity to thank our union partners, our business partners, our health workers, our essential workers, and all the public for their support during this pandemic period. It is with their strength and backing that the Government will help Bermuda come out of the pandemic stronger than before it went in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, I will be very brief because—

The Speaker: Yes, Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. I will be brief because the principles discussed in the opening remarks in the previous legislation apply to this as well.

As I said, we support the legislation because it has to be done because of the challenges faced in Bermuda, because we need to support the people of Bermuda, we need to support our businesses, we need to support our economy, and the only way to support all of them is to have more money in circulation, which will be the foundation for the growth of our economy.

The only thing that I would like for the Minister of Finance to address is the issue of the actuarial review. When we did the original temporary suspension back in July or June of last year, he made a commitment to have the actuarial review completed by July of last year. And I am not aware that it has been completed and I just ask the Minister for an update on when that actuarial report will be made public.

And those are my comments. As I said, I am not going to be long on this one because we discussed the principle in the previous legislation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There appear to be none.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the actuarial review, I think it has been a tradition of myself and my predecessors to table before this Honourable House the actuarial reviews once they have been completed. I can advise the Honourable House that I have not yet received the latest update.

When I do so I will be first sure to share that update with Cabinet, at which point they will approve for me to table such report for the consideration of the Honourable House. But as at this point, no report has been submitted to my office and, therefore, I am still waiting for the update.

I am pleased to advise honourable colleagues that work is ongoing with respect to both the PSSF and the CPF as we develop strategies around ensuring that their solvency is extended beyond their existing lifecycle.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:08 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 3.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends the definition of “suspension period” in section 2 of the Temporary CPA, to allow for different suspension periods of 12 months to be specified by order made by the Minister of Finance in relation to specified categories of contributors, and such orders shall be made subject to the negative resolution procedure and may be made with retrospective effect.

Clause 3 provides for retrospective effect of this Act on 29 June 2020, the day on which the Temporary CPA came into effect.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, MP Pearman.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, I am sorry Honourable Member, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable Minister of Finance, I have effectively the same two questions, but in respect of this Contributory Pensions Bill. In respect of clause 2 inserting the new [section 2(1)(a) and (b)], and specifically, in respect of the new (b), “in relation to such category or categories of persons,” can the Honourable Minister just confirm that the categories of persons that this is considering are the same as the previous Bill, namely, the police, who we now resolved matters with, and the fire and prison officers? Is it the same categories as the last Bill?

And my second and final question is the same question put previously, which is that we understand that the suspensions will be for the same length of time no matter what category of employment it deals with, even if the periods themselves are different. Can the Minister simply confirm that this is also the position under this Bill?

Thank you, Honourable Minister and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Pearman. Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I can confirm both points.

The Chairman: Okay.
Any further speakers?
Minister, do you want to move?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. 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 appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister Dickinson.

Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:11 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There appear to be none. The Bill has been reported as printed and received.

Members, that now brings us to a close of the Orders for today and we will do our third readings starting with the Minister of National Security.

Minister, would you like to do your third reading? Minister?

Minister Dickinson, will you do your third readings for your two items in the meantime?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Sure.

The Speaker: And can we have Minister Ming be on standby for her readings after you complete your two?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.
Minister, continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read the third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by its title only and passed.

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Temporary Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister, will you do the next one?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to that?

There are none, continue Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS TEMPORARY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read the third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by its title only and it is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Contributory Pensions Temporary Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister Ming.

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I apologise.
I move that Standing Order 21—

The Speaker: You almost got caught in your slips there, but I know you are a St. George's person so that is not a surprise.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: The resilience of St. George's.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to that?

There are none, continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

FIRE SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Renee Ming: 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 passed.

[Motion carried: The Fire Safety Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Members, that brings us to a close of today.

Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, before I move the motion to adjourn, I am informed that one or two of my Honourable Members would like to speak to this motion, so I would hate for you to throw down a gavel at 3:15 pm on a wonderful Friday.

The Speaker: Well, Mr. Premier, you know how the process goes. If my gavel goes down before they stand, then we all go home.

Hon. E. David Burt: I can see MP Christopher Famous is ready to go, so I will say, Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, June 4th at 10:00 am.

The Speaker: Would any Member care to speak to that?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It sounds like a friend of mine from down in Devonshire.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, I am actually on the west side of your right today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, being you [do not have] anything to do in the west today I know you will get your 20 minutes in easily. Give us your 20 minutes, then.

BERMUDA'S ECONOMY

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, there was an actor years ago, you may know him, he was named Ed Asner. Do you remember him?

The Speaker: He was a westerner, liked to play in westerns. No, he was a . . . yes, yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: You are from that spaghetti western era.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: He also used to do this PSA [public service announcement] called RIF. Do you know what RIF means, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Reading is Fundamental, RIF.

So, back in the 1970s he used to encourage young children to always read, take up a book. You know, we did not have Internet back then and all that type of stuff, so how we learned was by reading. And by reading you were able to comprehend, by reading you were able to sift, you know, in a biblical sense, the wheat from the chaff, what is fiction from non-fiction.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was reading something (because reading is fundamental), and I read something that was most likely written by an OBA consultant, but put out in the name of someone else, who . . . I will not call their name, but they know who they are.

This OBA consultant, fronted by someone else, put out some ludicrous claims about the current state of our country. The first claim: *We have an economy in the toilet*. So, I said, let me do my research on this because reading is fundamental. And then I read something that was put out by our Honourable ¹Minister of Finance. Let me read that, Mr. Speaker, if possible:

"After the evaluation of the information received through their discussion and research, S&P [Standard & Poor's] has affirmed Bermuda's A+ long-term sovereign credit and senior unsecured debt ratings as well as its A-1 short-term rating and its AA+ transfer and convertibility assessment with the outlook assessed as Stable."

Now, I never studied finance, but I know what the word "stable" means. It means the exact opposite of the claim of that the OBA consultant, fronted by someone else, wrote.

They went on: *An unstable education system*. Unstable education system . . . so, here we have, again, the OBA attacking the public education system. Now, it does not take a genius to recognise what they are really saying, Mr. Speaker, because they never attack the private education system, but they are always attacking the public education system.

Let us look at the demographics, one set of demographics in the private education, another set of demographics in public education. But the OBA is freely attacking the public education system. So, we have to ask ourselves, are they attacking the teach-

¹ Ministerial Statement 7 May 2021

ers? No. Are they attacking the principals? Are they attacking the parents of the children that go to public education? Are they attacking the children themselves? Or are they attacking the BUT—Bermuda's Union of Teachers? Maybe they are just attacking everybody because, you know, for some people, especially OBA consultants, they see us all as one and they just attack us unrelentingly.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, the next claim: *Unemployment benefits not being paid.*

Mr. Speaker, again, let me say something that I read. The Honourable Finance Minister read out that over \$5 million had been paid out recently in unemployment benefits to over 4,000 persons. There were about 600 persons where there were some glitches due to incomplete or incorrect forms. But for the most part, 85 per cent (according to my Berkeley math) of the people have been paid. Now, if you are a person [who is] waiting on unemployment benefits, yes, of course, you are going to be a bit angry. But to say *unemployment benefits have not been paid*, is a total lie . . . sorry, misrepresentation of the truth.

They go on to make some more claims. *Citizens unable to pay mortgage and rent. People unable to feed themselves. Growing numbers of people out of work. Businesses that have closed or are on the brink of closing.*

Mr. Speaker, I could be wrong, but the Government of Bermuda did not invent COVID-19. We did not put out a big sign and say, *Hey, COVID-19, come to Bermuda and cause us gross economic pandemic.* It definitely did not say *put people's lives in danger.* It did not say that *gatherings of more than 10 could result in becoming a super-spreader event.* No, we did not do that, Mr. Speaker. Circumstances beyond our control happened and we—the Government of Bermuda, led by the Honourable Premier David Burt and the Honourable Health Minister Kim Wilson and all other supporting Ministers—had to put things in place to stop a health threat in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my wife runs a salon. She had to close it for three weeks. It hurt financially, but she is alive. Her staff are alive. Her customers are alive. This is the price we all have to pay for something that is beyond our control.

Mr. Speaker, they go on to say, *Roads in deplorable states.* Roads in deplorable states, the same roads that the OBA had, that they did not pave—those roads. Is the OBA attacking the people driving on the roads? Maybe not. Are they attacking the workers who toil on the highways section at Works & Engineering? Or are they attacking the BIU? No one knows. But they just make these blatant statements.

They go on again: *Trash overflowing in certain areas.* Mr. Speaker, I do not drive from west to central as you do every day, but I was up in Somerset on Sunday. I was actually on East Shore Road. Mr. Speaker, you know that road.

The Speaker: Go ahead, go ahead.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I was up there visiting my Aunt Mae Smith on East Shore Road because it was her birthday.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I saw people on Sunday putting their trash out religiously. So, I said, *Auntie, why is this trash like out ahead?*

And she said, *Oh, well, you know, Christopher, they put it out on Sundays because every Monday the trash truck comes bright and early and picks it up.*

Now, anyone who knows my Aunt Mae knows that if the trash did not come get picked up, I would not hear the end of it, and you would not hear the end of it. So, these claims about trash overflowing in certain areas . . . who are they attacking? Are they attacking the Works & Engineering sanitation workers who are out there every day picking up trash? I put my trash out every Thursday. Town people put their trash out on Thursday. Every Thursday night my trash is empty. So, who are they attacking?

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, *unkempt landscapes.* Is the OBA attacking the Works & Engineering and Parks Department staff? I do not know, but they keep attacking.

They go on again: *Unreliable public transportation.* Let us see. The gentlemen and ladies in blue driving the pink and blue buses doing their utmost to move people around this country. Mr. Speaker, of all the Caribbean islands, Bermuda has one of the most . . . most Caribbean islands do not even have a public transportation system. The Cayman Islands wants to get what we have, the BVI wants to get what we have. And in all of this, our transportation workers are out there risking their lives every day because they are being exposed to people getting on the bus. But they do it. And if they have to shut down for a day to get tested, that is what we do, because we do not want a bus driver (bus operator, I should say) who is sick who may pass it to others. But no, the OBA, instead of saying *let us help the bus drivers*, they say *unreliable public transportation.*

Mr. Speaker, reading is fundamental; comprehension is key. The narrative which the OBA is trying to paint is to try and attack the PLP. But in reality, they are really attacking the workers of this Island. They are attacking the unions of this Island. They simply cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They cannot on one hand say, *Oh, we need to trim down the deficit. Oh, we need to trim down the budget.* And then, on the other hand, complain that we do not have enough staff to fulfil all that we need to do as a government. Do they want us to hire more people? And then they say, *Oh look, you've bloated the civil service.* They cut . . . they . . . they are . . . what is the

saying the Indians used to say? They speak with forked tongues.

You see, Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago the OBA had an advert *We need a public relations consultant*. It seems to me they must have hired him, because over the last few months they have been churning out a lot—a lot—of stuff.

Well, here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. This party will not have the OBA or their consultants attacking the workers of this island. This party will not have the OBA or its consultants attacking the unions of this country.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, point of order. I have sat here and listened to this—

The Speaker: Point of order. Point of order. Yes, Opposition Leader?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The gentleman, the Member, is misleading the House. We are not criticising the unions. We are not criticising the people of this country. We are not criticising civil servants. What we are doing is, we are making recommendations on how we can improve the services provided in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: MP, be mindful of the Member's comments.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I am mindful about the people's comments. Attacking and saying the roads are in a deplorable state, saying that it is an unstable education system . . . that is no recommendation, Mr. Speaker. That is an attack on the workers of this Island.

So, let me move on, Mr. Speaker. This party will not have it. I will not have it. This party is a labour party, as you know, born out of the struggles of the 1940s, the 1950's and the 1960s. Persons like Joe Mills, Robert Johnson, Cal Smith, Dorothy Thompson, Dr. Barbara Ball, Mr. Socky Wade. All of these people knew that to further the aims of the labour of this country—Black, white, Portuguese, whatever—we needed a political entity. And in 1963 this labour party was born. And since then we have effected political change in one way or the other.

Forty years ago, Mr. Speaker, this month, the workers of Bermuda banded together and had to show the forefathers of the party that Honourable Cole Simons, Opposition Leader (who was part of the UBP) that we are not going to take their insults. You are not

going to come to us with a 5 per cent raise when the cost of living has gone up by 20 per cent. You are not going to do it. It is not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would like to intervene. Point of order.

The Speaker: Member, will you yield?

We have a point of order. State your point of order.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I do not . . . no, I do not yield.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: He is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I do not yield.

The Speaker: Ah—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Members, Members. A point of order has to be accepted. A point of clarity you do not have to accept; but a point of order . . . we will take the point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I know that no one in our team is insulting any member of our community. But as I said, making contributions and ways to improve the Island is not insulting or disrespectful to the community.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, reading is fundamental.

Words such as “unstable education system,” words such as “deplorable roads,” words such as . . . negative words. You cannot use negative words to encourage people.

Mr. Speaker, moving on. The OBA consultants seem to think we have forgotten 1981. No, we have not. We are Government because labour stood by us. We are Government because the workers of Bermuda believe in us.

Is everything perfect, Mr. Speaker? No.

Do we agree on everything? No. No family does.

However, let it be clear that this administration under the Honourable E. David Burt has made tremendous strides in making things better for the workers of this country—the Employment Act Amendment 2020, increasing employee benefits; the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act [2020], which, I may add, put in place that all workers in any

union shop pay union dues because they all get union representation. We closed 42 additional job categories; we provided training and development for 176 workers since September 2020; we successfully implemented a graduate training programme; we implemented unemployment benefits and supplementary unemployment benefits with \$65 million spent—all for the workers of this Island.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the unions assisted us, our political party, in our times of need. And I challenge each one of my MPs—yourself included, Mr. Speaker—to do your part to assist the unions, encourage every worker on this Island to get unionised because, if you do not, you are going to be subject to attacks from people.

Mr. Speaker, I have two words, two terms, and then I close here: *Onward and upward together* and *United we stand*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I will not take that much, sir.

The Speaker: Okay.

A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE—RESTORING HOPE IN OUR YOUTH

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of a group that for many, many years has felt unvalued, unwanted, unheard in their own country. It is a group that has seen economic conditions like none of us have seen in our lifetime. They have seen periods of almost non-stop war and conflict. They are a group that saw our Island ravaged by gang violence and gun violence in a way that we never experienced growing up.

Mr. Speaker, I am talking about our youth, specifically our people under 30, who are a unique group shaped by their experiences. And you know, we can always feature the outliers and the people who are doing well and people who do not share these attitudes and beliefs, but we must also look towards those who feel that they are being left behind, that they are not being heard, and that there is no place for them in their own country.

Mr. Speaker, when I first got involved in politics, initially in the late 1990s, and elected in 2002, I was not quite 30 years old. And at the time I was passionate, and I remained passionate about Bermudianisation. I remained passionate about not having a Bermuda where my children, your children, other people's children will not have the same opportunities, not have the same chances, not have the same treatment that their countrymen of a different colour or a different name or a different background would have.

Mr. Speaker, when I came back to Bermuda, I saw Bermudians my age who had done what they were supposed to do—go to college, work hard, study hard—and still [were] subjected to things like teaching a non-Bermudian how to be their boss, subjected to things like being told, *You're just a little boy or a little girl to me, so just . . . you have nothing to contribute*.

Mr. Speaker, while the years have passed and I no longer fit into that category, I have never forgotten the feeling of not being wanted in my own country, not being heard, not being listened to, not seeing a place for myself.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when I went into my constituency initially in 2014, I was the then Shadow Minister of Tourism. And during my time as Shadow Minister of Tourism and even as Minister of Tourism, I spent a lot of time encouraging. I was very passionate about getting a Bermudian industry growing within tourism, whether it was within the workforce, whether it was in entrepreneurship, whether it was within supporting services—Bermudian led, Bermudian-dominated, Bermudian to the core.

I would talk to a lot of young men and some young women and I would try to encourage them, particularly some who had parents who had served in the hospitality industry. And they told the same story. *My mother worked her fingers to the bone and never was paid a decent wage. My mother worked her fingers to the bone and never got a promotion. My mother worked her fingers to the bone and never was able to fully make ends meet. And they would ask me, Why should I follow in that path? Why should I follow in those footsteps?* And I struggled to answer it and I struggle with the answer.

And while I continue to encourage and continue to fight for improved conditions and things like the living wage, we have to deal with, within some of our young people, a crisis of confidence. As a generation this is not just unique to Bermuda, this is a global condition. There are those of our young people who are losing faith with the institutions that we held dear, institutions that got us through slavery, institutions that got us through segregation. Everything is being questioned and found wanting, whether it is political parties, whether it is politicians, whether it is church. There is a crisis of confidence that is the elephant in the room that we do not speak of.

Mr. Speaker, the economic conditions that they have seen are so different. And it is easy to point

the finger of blame, but we have been through some global economic times that I think even our grandparents did not experience, and a global pandemic. And what I am hearing more and more is that there is no desire to return to the world that was, there is no desire to achieve the Bermuda that they have never seen and that we talk about so fondly. They believe we are capable of better. They expect better and they want better and they are demanding better.

Mr. Speaker, when you talk to a group who believes it is likely that they will never own a home in their own country, a group that is perhaps the most gifted and talented that our people have produced, the loss of faith in institutions, the loss of faith in processes, represents a dangerous, dangerous catalyst for the years ahead. And this is something that is not the job of one politician, or the blame of one politician, or the job of one party, or the blame of one party. This is something that each of us should be concerned about and each of us should be doing our part to address.

Where their perceptions are wrong, we should be engaging with them where they are—not through Ministerial Statements and press releases and speeches in Parliament, but where they are. We want them to be—not where we hope they will be, not what we think they should be—where they are, in their spaces, in their places, in their environment, listening without judgment, accepting their world view and finding ways to incorporate ideas that can help, whether it is necessary to improve their world view or improve the world that they see and they want to see changed.

Mr. Speaker, it would be easy now, because that is the pattern of this political system that we have inherited from white supremacy and colonialism, to use this platform as an opportunity to [take] pot-shots at each other, shoot shots at each other, and it is a great deal of fun, you know, when you really get into it. But at the end of the day, it does not matter because these young people are not impressed and they are not even listening.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage Members, instead of firing shots at each other on this issue, to actually begin speaking as passionately with, to and about our young people as we do for our seniors. I am proud of my Members, like the Honourable Derrick Burgess and the Honourable Zane DeSilva who will say proudly *I love my seniors*. And I love them too. But I love our youth. I love their potential, I love their idealism, I love their passion for change. And that is something that we have a part in making sure never gets extinguished, never gets dulled, and, more importantly never, ever is led to antisocial behaviour or to another country.

We have a role to play to restore hope; we have a role to play by pushing idealism over pragmatism. We have a role to play, Mr. Speaker. And if you are playing it already as a Member of this Chamber or in the other place, then you need to continue. And if you are not, I really encourage you now, beginning

this weekend, to get in the spaces of our young people, meet them where they are, where they are comfortable, and listen and see the Bermuda that they see, see the Bermuda that they want to see for themselves and for their children and all of us do our part to help build it.

They are in the *what-have-you-done-for-me-lately* business. While our history is important, while our achievements are important, if they are not feeling them, if they are not touching them, it is not what they want to hear.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I close my remarks, I would just encourage every Member to reflect: Are we doing enough for our young people? Are we connecting enough with our young people? Are we listening to them? Are we being an example to them? Are we guiding them? And, where appropriate, are we providing a vision that excites them and drives them forward?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Simmons.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Opposition Leader.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have your 20 minutes.

A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE—RESTORING HOPE IN OUR YOUTH

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you very much.

I would like to start off where the Honourable Jamahl Simmons just left. I think he raises very good points about our young people. In fact, I share his sentiment. I have interacted with a number of young people on a daily basis in my job at the bank and through my children and their friends. And I have to commend Jamahl for his contributions, because he is saying what these young people are saying to us.

And, as a consequence, I am making it my personal business to address and support our young people wherever I can and try to regain some of the respect that they had for their seniors and adults that we had when we were coming along.

MP Simmons is right. If you talk to many of them, they feel that they cannot buy a home like their parents have and that they, in some cases, have given up hope and are just living day-to-day and whatever will be, whatever will be because they feel that we are not supporting them and that their voices are not being heard.

So, again, I am prepared to work with Mr. Simmons if he has got a group that he is working with, and I am on the same band wagon as he is in that space.

The reason I . . . I just had to speak on that because he moved me and I thought that he was spot-on in regard to a number of young people in this country.

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to take this opportunity to offer my warmest regards to the people of Bermuda as we celebrate Bermuda Day next week. We will not be in the House of Assembly and so, I thought it was appropriate that I do it today.

As you all know, we are in unprecedented times because of the pandemic, and next week's Bermuda Day will not be like the Bermuda Days of the past where we had celebrations and we had the Gombeys, we had the carnival trucks, we had the majorettes, we had the dancers, and [this year] all that has to be curtailed. We still have the sailing and we still have beaching, but Bermuda Day, this coming year, again, will be different. And be that as it may, we, as a community, will relax. We as a community, we will have fun. We will spend time with our families and we will spend time talking to our elders, talking about our rich culture and our rich character.

The other interesting thing that we need to also address in this country is the faces of Bermudians are changing. We are diverse Bermudians. We have seen mixtures and Bermudians of different ethnic backgrounds, different country origins, and the tapestry of Bermudians is becoming more cosmopolitan. But at the end of the day, despite the diversity, we are one people and we are all Bermudians. And Bermuda Day will give our diverse Bermudian population the opportunity to reflect on who we are and what we have in common.

You know, we are proud to be Bermudian. When you went away travelling with your family—your mother, your father—or you were going to university, people asked you, *Where are you from?* And you proudly stuck out your chest and said, *I am Bermudian*. The fact is, despite all the challenges that we face today, we still have that sense of pride in who we are and the role that we have to play in Bermuda and in the world. As you all know, are a small country—21 square miles. And I hate to say this, *we are always punching above our weight*. We have world-acclaimed scholars, world-acclaimed athletes, musicians, artists, designers, educators, any profession, medicine—we are world-class people, world-class people because we have founded our base through Bermudian family traditions, through the strength of our families, and the strength of our communities.

So, I would like to close by saying, Bermuda is our home, it is a beautiful place, and we all here

today are committed to improving this country. We continue to strive to promote its success, to protect it, and maintain our Island home.

In closing, this Bermuda Day, let us extend our thoughts and prayers to the families and friends who have been affected by COVID-19. We must continue to assist where we can, no matter what the challenge because we are our brothers' keepers, we are Bermudian.

So, with all this in mind, with this great pride, I wish the Members of the House and the people of Bermuda—Happy Bermuda Day!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Weeks, you have the floor.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to you.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

BERMUDA DAY

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, like the Member before me, as this is our last sitting prior to Bermuda Day, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Bermuda Day!

And Mr. Speaker, in the midst of this pandemic, this Bermuda Day is going to be one like none other. Not just a lack of the celebration, but it is going to be a testament to who we are as Bermudians and it is going to test our mettle.

Now is the time, while we celebrate Bermuda Day, Mr. Speaker, to look out for those who need looking out for. I have heard Members before me talk about the seniors. We need to look out for our seniors, we need to look out for our youth, and make sure that this Bermuda Day can still be enjoyable.

But Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity every chance I get to talk about how this holiday has actually evolved. From changing it from a May 24th celebration from the colonial era, over the years it has evolved from celebrating on May 24th to celebrating the last Friday of May, to now we have evolved to celebrating the Friday before the last Monday. This is really a testament, Mr. Speaker, to our Government. The "progressive" in the Progressive Labour Party where we have moved 50 times as we celebrate and acknowledge Bermuda Day and what that means, what that means to our seniors, what that means to our children, what that means to our economy, be-

cause this is an opportunity for us to come together, Mr. Speaker, and grow together.

But you know a lot of . . . there is a segment of us that are averse to or slow in changing, I should say, Mr. Speaker. Because I have had some calls, I have had some WhatsApps from people saying that they prefer for us to celebrate Bermuda Day on the 24th of May. That is a bygone era, Mr. Speaker, and I think change . . . change takes time to adjust to. You know it has always been traditional, but that, too, we will get used to, Mr. Speaker.

Just yesterday, which made me want to speak to it, I was talking to an old friend of mine. He popped by to visit. And he said that a friend of his had talked to him and was telling him that he misses the time when Bermuda Day was celebrated on the 24th of May and he really wished we could go back to it. And it turned into a spirited conversation as to the history of it, why we sought to do it from a cultural perspective, from an economic perspective, and just moving away from our colonial mind-set step by step. So, each thing that we do to rid ourselves of the colonial mind-set is, in my humble opinion, a step closer to independence, which should be and is—for most of us—our ultimate goal. But I ended that conversation, Mr. Speaker, saying that we will be all right, you know, that we will grow together, we will understand what it means to really celebrate Bermuda Day.

But Mr. Speaker, I do not have much else to say other than, that as we stand on the . . . my reminder now to the participants of Bermuda Day next week, mainly the fans, as we line the streets to cheer on our residents who run the race in this gruelling heat sometimes, but heat or not, 13.1 miles to a lot of us is gruelling, Mr. Speaker. I am one of those that always say I am going to run next year. I have not gotten to that yet, but, again, I am saying hopefully I will be ready for next year.

But Mr. Speaker, during the cheering, I implore our residents, our spectators, to be mindful that we are still in the midst of a pandemic. As much as our Premier and our Government want us to get back to normal as quick as possible, we have to be mindful that while we are on the side of the street we have to remember that physical distancing and other safety measures must still be in effect. So, let us . . . let us be sensible in our celebration next week, Mr. Speaker.

And lastly, as we celebrate, let us be mindful that those field marshals, those marshals that are going to be along the route, they are part of us too, so let us give them an easy time and obey their urgings and whatnot so that we all could have an enjoyable Bermuda Day, Mr. Speaker, and still come out of it with our cases of COVID-19 on the decrease rather than on the rise.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I close, Happy Bermuda Day to you! Happy Bermuda Day to my colleagues! Happy Bermuda Day to Bermuda! And Godspeed and

good health to all those who will be running in the race next week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Weeks.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. It is Ianthia Simmons-Wade.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade, you have the floor.

REMEMBERING AND CARING FOR OUR SENIORS

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity as well to wish a Happy Bermuda Day to my colleagues and to all of Bermuda. I also take this opportunity to shout out to my constituency—constituency 25.

But I am aware, I am sure, most of us are aware that the majority of the people who listen to the House are seniors. We have more people who are home, but seniors tend to listen to the House and listen to the Senate. So, my message, as the Chair of the Ageing Well Committee, is to give some messages to our seniors and just a few tips.

I am sure all of you are aware that seniors are the fastest growing segment of our population. This year . . . well, in 2019, the senior population was approximately 18 per cent. By 2026, the senior population is going to be 25 per cent, which means that for every 100 people, [25] of them will be seniors. Many of our seniors are living at home and what is very important is that we ensure that these seniors [may continue to] stay at home. So, the increase of the population for our seniors is going to impact every segment of our community—health care, pensions, insurance, housing—every single segment is going to be impacted.

So, for our seniors I am just going to give a few tips today. First of all, decide if you want to get the vaccine by checking the facts, speaking to your doctor, and making a decision if you get your vaccine.

Secondly, which I think is very important, that vaccine is not going to give you superpowers. So, it means that suddenly having the vaccine does not mean that you can get out and do whatever you want to do.

Thirdly, it is important that as a senior you must realise that you are extremely vulnerable in terms of being affected significantly with your health in terms of the COVID-19, so it is very important that you avoid large gatherings, do not go out in crowds, and sort of segregate yourself.

Also, it is important as a senior to ensure that you do go outside, that you exercise, that you get fresh air. Also, you need to, in terms of taking care of

yourself as a senior, it is also important that you do not delay getting any medical care or any emergency treatment. Also, if you are a senior and you are going out to work, it is also important that you ensure that you protect yourself.

Now, one of the things that we do not like to think about is whether we end up getting COVID-19—and I say this to everyone—you need to be sure that you are prepared in the event that you get COVID-19 or anyone in your house gets COVID-19. So, it is important to ensure that you have everything in place to treat yourself, whether it is Tylenol or whatever your doctor recommends, that you also do that.

One of the things that happens with many of our seniors is that during the quarantine they have been extremely isolated. So, I encourage everyone who is listening to check on your neighbours, to check on your senior family members, and stay connected with those individuals. And as Minister Ming had said, with the hurricane coming, it is also important that you reach out to your neighbours and your senior family members to ensure that they are looked after or the communication is there.

And most important for our seniors, many of them who are out there and who are still capable, it is important to reach out and to help other people, whether it is financially, whether it is physically, or whether it is during a hurricane.

So, my message to everyone today, as a child or even as a senior, is not to forget our seniors and realise they have laid the foundation for this country, they deserve the respect and they would deserve the honour as seniors.

So, Happy Bermuda Day! And thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Simmons-Wade.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that MP Campbell?

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is correct, sir.

The Speaker: MP Campbell, you have your 20 minutes.

UNITING BERMUDA—NO ONE IS SAFE UNTIL WE ALL ARE SAFE

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, on May 11th an article came out that contained a call for unity from two of the former Premiers of the country, Sir John Swan and the Honourable Alex Scott. They both were quoted . . . and Mr. Speaker, do I have your permission to read some brief quotes?

The Speaker: Brief quotes, yes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, Sir John is quoted in this article as saying, “It is time for us to find the collective will as a country, as a people to work together and work together in collaboration in moving Bermuda forward.”

And the Honourable Alex Scott is quoted as saying “It is our responsibility to bring everybody together with the object of solving problems. . . . If collectively we now focus on finding those solutions to the challenges we have today, we are not going to do too badly.”

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has a long history of coming together to overcome challenges, whether these challenges are internal or external. Our international business community continues to innovate and evolve to meet the challenges from competitive jurisdictions thereby Bermuda remains as a premier jurisdiction for doing business.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today we heard the Honourable Renee Ming, Minister of National Security encourage us to be ready for the upcoming hurricane, get our supplies together, get our batteries, our flashlights, our medications. Again, history demonstrates that we readily come together when facing a hurricane. We assist our neighbours. Once our preparations are finished, we assist our neighbours in their preparations ahead of the storm. In the aftermath, if there is a tree down, we ban together, Black, white, Portuguese, it does not make a difference, to get that tree out of the way. If our neighbour’s roof is off, we help them cover it up to protect their assets and their possessions. If they need food because the electricity is out, we help them in that area. How we can help seems to be fairly clear. And we just jump to it and get it done.

Mr. Speaker, today, as has been the case for the last 15 months, Bermuda is engaged in a battle against the coronavirus, COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, in the initial stages of this fight, in true Bermuda spirit, we came together as a community as a whole and supported sheltering in place, lockdowns, wearing of masks, social distancing, curfews, et cetera. But, Mr. Speaker, as we have seen over the last several months, there has been opposition to some of the measures implemented and proposed by the Government, particularly around continued restrictions and different options for vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. I have had conversations with many of my constituents around these topics. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, we have neighbours, work colleagues, friends and family divided by their beliefs on and around the vaccine. And I will declare that I am fully vaccinated. I did so to protect a young one at home. And as a country, we are blessed to have doses of the vaccine in our possession. That has caused some disagreement.

Mr. Glenn Fubler, one of my constituents, recently released an op-ed entitled “No one is safe until we are all safe.” And I want to thank him for reminding us that this phrase is the slogan of a six-month campaign initiated by India and South Africa. And the object of this campaign was to expedite the distribution, the delivery of the vaccine to the many nations that either do not have any of the vaccine at all or who have insufficient vaccine. How is this relevant to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker? I am not safe, Mr. Speaker, until you are safe. My children are not safe until I am safe. My neighbours’ children are not safe until their parents are safe, and so on. Mr. Speaker, it is also relevant to Bermuda in that whilst other nations have no vaccine, or insufficient vaccine, we have vaccine but insufficient people, insufficient individuals seeking to receive it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to add to any division that may already exist, but rather, like my colleague, the Honourable Michael Weeks said in a recent op-ed, I would like to encourage us to move forward together. We can still be unified in the fight and have our differences about the vaccine. No matter what your decision is as it relates to the vaccine, I respect your personal choice. To those who are fully vaccinated, please be reminded that you can still get the virus, although your chances are reduced. You can still infect others with the virus, although the chances of that are reduced.

To those who are on the fence about getting the vaccine, if you have not already done so, consult your physician. If you do not have a doctor, take advantage of one of the doctors who are at the “Close to Home” [Mobile Vaccination Programme] locations. Ask them questions. To those who are never going to get the vaccine no matter what, please do all that you can to remain safe and protect your family and friends.

To everyone: No matter what your status is as it relates to the vaccine, please, please follow the health care protocols so that we can open up the economy, that we can return to some semblance of normalcy. If we could identify those ahead of time, who would not obey the rules, left to their own devices to quarantine, et cetera, then I am sure we would do so. But we cannot.

So as we attempt to open our economy and return to some semblance of normalcy, and as we will soon celebrate Bermuda Day and start to enjoy some of the activities that the warmer weather brings, or attempt to enjoy those activities, remember that no one is safe until we all are safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, thank you, MP Campbell.

Sounds like, Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I—

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes. Go right ahead.

REMEMBERING AND CARING FOR OUR SENIORS

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking in terms of the remarks by Honourable Member Famous, Honourable Member Jamahl Simmons, Honourable Member Weeks, and the Honourable Member Ianthia [Simmons-] Wade, let me first address the remarks by Honourable Member Weeks concerning running in the 24th of May Marathon. Well, he has had his name down for the last 20 years, and is running next year. So I just want to warn people, don’t look to seeing him run next year or any years in the future. He will not run because he cannot run. So I want to put that to bed.

Mr. Speaker, I think what I would ask everybody to do is to be kind, to continue to be kind and considerate to our seniors. Our seniors have played a major part in where we sit, stand and live today. They have carried all the heavy weight in the struggle to be where we are today. The battle is not lost. We will have some in the community, some in this world that will want you to erase the history. But let me say, history cannot be erased. And I would implore all—all—to read the books on our history. We have a very—I would not say rich history in terms of struggle. It is . . . it is . . . we have history that is . . . a lot of us would like to forget but we cannot forget. Some of the scars are still there.

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, I think it was the Honourable Member Michael Weeks who, I would say, championed the Bill to change the 24th of May holiday to fall in conjunction with the American holiday. I mean, he was right (in my opinion) because, Mr. Speaker, he did that so the American holiday and our holiday can be together. We normally benefit from much travel from the States during their holiday periods. And one of his main objectives was for our guests, our tourists, to enjoy the festivities of our Bermuda Days. So I would certainly support him. I supported him then. I support him now in championing that Bill to change the holiday to what it is now, Mr. Speaker.

ST. REGIS HOTEL OPENING

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the opening of the St. Regis Hotel. I travel that way practically every day. And I want to congratulate them on the product they have around there. Now, Mr. Speaker, some may want to blame Minister Hayward

for the number of staff that we have, in terms of work permits. That is something that we inherited. I know Minister Hayward has worked hard to try to adjust those numbers. But when you inherit something . . . you know, that is what it is in politics. You have to work with it. So, please, do not blame Minister Hayward, do not blame this Government, this was what was given . . . and I am not even going to blame the other party. They did what they thought was necessary to get this hotel to be built in Bermuda.

Let me say that this hotel brings commerce to St. George's, something that is desperately needed. Something that they have not had since . . . I think it was 1988, or 1987 that the last hotel operated there in St. George's. So that is over 30 years. It is a welcome addition to St. George's to have the St. Regis hotel. So I want to commend everybody—all the workers, the foreign workers and the Bermudian workers that worked to make that a six-star hotel. And let me say, we have always had six-star service. Many, many years ago, we had civil service in the hotel, and particularly the small properties that civil service . . . we had service second to none, particularly the cottage colonies like the Pink Beach, the Coral Beach, and places . . . and Cambridge Beaches, and Castle Harbour Hotels. We had "six-star plus" service.

This is what St. Regis is embarking upon. This is what . . . Tucker's Point is a six-star hotel. And Bermuda is a very expensive location, and people . . . we do have clientele in the market that will pay the big bucks for six-star properties, but you have to give them the service. So this is the endeavour of Tucker's Point, the endeavour of St. Regis, it is the endeavour of the Hamilton Princess, and I think it is the endeavour of all of the hotels in Bermuda. It is to give that six-star service that Bermuda is so famous for, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I wish all the success to the hotel in St. George's, the St. Regis, all the success in their golf course and the running of their hotel and to the people of St. George's, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with that I wish all, all in Bermuda, particularly our seniors—particularly our seniors—let's never, ever forget them. Let's continue to thank them for the position we are in today. I am forever eternally grateful to them and indebted to them because I, like others—we, I should be saying—stand on the shoulders of our seniors. Never, ever forget that, Mr. Speaker, and Bermuda.

They are the champions. We are not the champions. They are the champions for us. We should always treasure and honour them. It is what I will continue to do. And I implore all my fellow Bermudians to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: All have a great holiday.

The Speaker: Likewise. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes.

MAKING GOLF INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE IN BERMUDA

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Honourable Deputy Speaker for his remarks, and I will follow on from where he left off by giving thanks to our seniors as we celebrate this Bermuda Day, and recognising those shoulders that they stand on.

And, yes, there is a new golf course coming to St. George's. I believe I have written about the importance of golf. I think sometimes it is good to take people down memory lane. Because in 1921, which was 100 years ago, a young man named Louis Rafael "Kid" Corbin learned to play at the St. George's Hotel which was located in St. George's for tourists and the garrison course long before the Mid Ocean and the Castle Harbour were even built. Louis Corbin left Bermuda in 1923, and in 1933 he was up at the Devonshire golf links, and you do not hear about him, but he is the standard bearer for desegregation of golf in North America, which includes Canada and the United States, and in Bermuda. He is a celebrated person who learned how to play golf on that very restored course that the Bermuda Government rebuilt in 1985 that I had the great pleasure of opening.

And, Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me, whilst I am very . . . I grew up in the hotel industry, as did the immediate past speaker, and am very appreciative of what the hotel industry [did] and what it will do for St. George's, let me not overlook how many people are feeling in Bermuda. In my trade of golf where we had trailblazers in Bermuda in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and even 50 years ago as we speak, we had people like Ralphie Fray pass away tragically and die and Frankie Rabain qualified for the British Open in 1971. And Walter King won the Bermuda Open in 1970 having learnt his trade.

But, you know, my experiences in golf, Mr. Speaker, have been very varied and celebratory in some respects. But I have experienced the wrath of those who prefer to treat people indignantly. I have seen that happen more recently in 2020, which rivals the time when I was escorted out of Faro Airport at

gunpoint, Mr. Speaker, on my way to the Tours School to have to go back to London. I have experienced showing up at the Country Club of Charleston in 1978 with the most celebrated amateur field gathered in the United States the week before the Masters, one year after Lee Elder was the first Black to play out, the first Black, unbeknownst to the tournament organisers, to play in that tournament.

I know what it feels like to be treated unfairly. I know what it feels like, Mr. Speaker, to represent an all-white university in an all-white field and come first in Monroe, Louisiana, and walk through there and represent us. I know what it feels like when people are going out of their way to treat you unfairly. I saw it happen in Bermuda in 2020, Mr. Speaker, and I am very close . . . it is wrong!

Mr. Speaker, as we look at my profession of golf, I saw an ad that called for a golf expert. And then someone called me just today and refers to them as . . . it is basically a groundsman's job. And when you have job categories that are out there that can be ambiguous, Mr. Speaker, it can defeat the very purpose. We as politicians are getting the calls, and all of us are getting the calls, about people wanting to work in our country and it is difficult, Mr. Speaker. It is very difficult to navigate through, as the Deputy Speaker rightly pointed out, an agreement that was put in place long before the Progressive Labour Party was Government that gave the right of the current operator to bring in a certain number of non-Bermudians to work in the field. And I applaud the Minister of Immigration for his efforts, the Honourable Jason Hayward, to work through this with his expertise in that very field.

But my profession, my trade, is what allowed the White Hill boy from Troy. You know, John Lewis is the country boy from Troy. I am the White Hill boy that went to Troy. And I kind of know some things about how people craft things to make things suit what they want to do. And I am seeing some of that taking place in this country in these spaces and in other spaces, Mr. Speaker, that I am prepared now in my life to get more specific with because, you know, I would know this week on the very golf course one of my dear friends was singing *St. George's boys forever*, and an hour later he was at the checkout counter of life. So I am not going to go down without fighting for what is right and pushing people to do likewise, and stand for likewise.

So all is not well in Gideon, Mr. Speaker. All is not well in some regards as it relates to Bermudians. Many Bermudians are feeling very . . . life is difficult. and I have to let them know that we care in the Progressive Labour Party as your Government. Call us. We are working hard behind the scenes on your behalf, the Cabinet Ministers and backbenchers alike, we are working.

But I just got to say, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to your profession and when it comes to that of which your trade and when you see, you know, per-

sons going to celebrate things and your folk and your people that you represent are not in that number yet, somebody has got to speak up and let them know that all is not well . . . and all is not well with our soul in that regard.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, as we look to make golf inclusive and diverse in Bermuda, as the United States and all places are trying to make the game of golf more inclusive and more diverse and more affordable, I just want to say that in this, the 50th anniversary of Port Royal Golf Course, when Walter King came up from Tucker's Town to lead Port Royal, he did just that! And that practice made it possible for the Dwayne Pearmans and the Cornell Beans and Glen Simmons and the Darron Woods and the Kim Swans and the Blake Marshalls and the Rickie Demores, and the Hav Trotts and the Craig Christensens to come together 50 years ago! No one has got to come out there and write a paragraph on how to do it. You have got to practice it. We lived it! And we can do those types of things again with the will! With the will to do it!

Mr. Speaker, in October of 1971 a young, very talented 23-year-old met his death on the road. His name was Wilfred "Ralph" Fray. And we will be celebrating him this year in his 50th anniversary. And that young man was an inspiration to me. I remember leaving Berkeley and going to his funeral up there with Damon and Cousin Whoopie and all that lot when he tragically died. We loved to idolise him. He could hit the ball far. He could make a lot of birdies. But he loved to ride his bike fast, like a lot of other young people, and we idolised him. And he met his death, and that was 50 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

[It was] 51 years ago, on October 29th, 1970, when Walter Eugene King became the first Bermudian to become a golf professional in a management position, I might add. You look at ads and you see that they will advertise golf and try to suggest that we are not management people. [He was in] a management position and made it possible for me to follow his footsteps. And he also sat in this very Honourable Chamber in the House of Assembly in the 1976 election. So, yes, role models matter! And, yes, it matters to have people who look like you in places of position because young people like me look up to them and young people today will do likewise. And if we are excluded it means that it is a ripple-down effect of exclusion.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is never a wrong time to do the right thing. And there are some things that have been going on and aided, and that . . . that I am trying, Mr. Speaker, to make right. That is all I am prepared to say at this particular time, but you know, I am serving notice. Some of us are getting tired, Mr. Speaker. Some of us have also been out there in the trenches fighting for what is right. [We] have travelled this world all by ourselves to carry others on our backs as we moved up the ladder. And I will do that until the

day I sing *St. George's boys forever*, and the Lord says *Okay, I need your choir up in somewhere else*.

As Cocky Steede said, he was looking forward to playing St. George's golf course. He and Apples were playing golf at Port Royal and said, *Well, if you go, we would rather go on the football field or the golf course*. And he went on the golf course. So he will not get a chance to fulfil that. But I am sure at the Pearly Gates there will be plenty of lovely, all-inclusive golf holes up there that he will be able to traverse, Mr. Speaker. So in the memory of people like Louis Corbin, in the memory of people like Johnny Smith for St. George's, in the memory of Bosun Swainson, and Herman Santucci Bascome, I just want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that if there is fair justice that needs to take place in our Island home, you can count on me to do my part. I know I can count on my colleagues likewise. But I just have a heavy heart in this regard today, Mr. Speaker, and I had to say that any of you who are out there that have a heavy heart, who are not employed, who are finding it difficult, know that you have people out here in the legislature who represent you, notwithstanding of where you may have stood when you went to [vote]. You can call us and we will hear your cries and try our best to advance your cause as we are trying our best to do.

And I just want to give a word of encouragement to the Premier and his team for the work that they do. It is a most difficult time to be a leader in this country. I have been around; I ran in the election of 1983, Mr. Speaker (that wasn't yesterday), as a 25-year-old. And I cannot think of any extended period of time, stretching 15 months that any group of leaders would have to traverse through such difficult periods without there being a war. And we were not around at that time when the world was at war. But the world is at war with a virus.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am proud to be one of those who have erred on side of science and appreciate that being in leadership is not easy. It is not easy. And there will be detractors, but we are prepared to listen to all sides and represent all people while we provide leadership in the best interest led by science, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes.

BERMUDA'S ECONOMY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed listening to the comments in the motion to adjourn tonight. I want to make my comments in the general vein of the subjects that have been on the table in the motion to adjourn.

First up, the Honourable Member from constituency 11 talked about the economy. And I have to take strong difference to his view. He said . . . he tried to state that the economy was in good condition and nothing could be further from the truth. I think, in my view, those comments are weak and they are off-base. The economy is in a very difficult position. And through my time here I will put some more meat on the bone to give some context, because I do not speak today to be critical of the Government. I speak today because if we are to move forward we need to appreciate and understand the situation we are in, if we are going to find some solutions to move forward. But our economy is certainly in a very difficult position. And for anyone to argue otherwise shows that they (1) perhaps do not have their foot on the ground to what is actually happening in Bermuda, and (2) they have very little knowledge of economics.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear, as I set the table to give an understanding of where we are, that COVID-19 has devastated Bermuda. There is no doubt about that. But it is also evident that before COVID-19 the economy was fairly weak. But here we are now in May of 2021 [and] hospitality is almost non-existent because of COVID-19. The taxi industry is on life support. Obviously with the closures we have had and the shelters-in-place, the taxi industry has not been able to be out and about, taking care of not only our visitors but Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, here we are today in May of 2021 and many people are out of work. As I mentioned during the Budget Debate, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to understand and appreciate that the largest employer in Bermuda is the public administration. And this is not in the context of being critical of the public administration. But when you have large employers like those in hospitality and those in international business, where previously they were number one and number two in the employment categories and they have now slipped out of that top spot, and public administration is there [in the top spot], it shows you the critical position that we are in, because jobs have been lost.

Jobs have been lost in all areas, as I went through in the Budget Debate (and I won't repeat myself), in hospitality jobs have been lost; critical jobs have been lost, Mr. Speaker. And so our economy is very weak. It was weak before COVID-19 and it is weaker now, and it is on life support. And to Government's credit, they have given a lot of support to the

people of Bermuda through COVID-19. But we cannot continue with that.

So it is not my intent this afternoon to lambaste the Government any way. I have never been one of those types of people to practice slash-and-burn politics. I will always be critical and critique the Government where it is appropriate, but I will also provide support and [alternate] views where it is necessary. So the MP from constituency 11 should, Mr. Speaker, in my words, not try to put lipstick on a pig. The reality is that our economy is in very bad shape.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: And the first step, Mr. Speaker, for our economy to be put back on a path to getting in a better position where our people are employed, is that we need to be able to open up. We need to rebuild. And I was very interested in, and I supported a lot of the comments that MP Campbell from constituency 9 (I believe) said about the vaccine, Mr. Speaker. The first step for us to get back on the path to recovery is for us to build up that community immunity. And now while I am disappointed that the Government has missed their target deadline of 70 per cent by May 28th, I believe the date was, we are about 50 per cent right now, I urge people to get vaccinated.

Vaccination is our way forward. It is the hope that it provides. I support the Government in this regard. I would urge people to take a look at the science, like colleagues have talked about today, and then make the decision for themselves. If we do not build up that community immunity, it will be more and more difficult for us to open up, and we could come to the point where we could fall back again, Mr. Speaker.

If you look across the world at how COVID-19 has ebbed and flowed in countries all over the world, Mr. Speaker, we have seen that some of those that previously were successful in what they have done to combat COVID-19, have had in recent days disturbing trends of upward numbers of COVID-19 cases, such as Taiwan, which was one of the countries at the [forefront] of it. Being a very close neighbour of China, they closed off their borders early and now they are facing a very critical period with numbers on the rise.

Singapore is in the same position, Mr. Speaker. So we know that in spite of the best endeavours by leaders in these countries, in spite of the best endeavours of communities trying to work together, that COVID-19 can get out of that bag again pretty quickly and hurt communities. And we cannot afford that in Bermuda. And that is why the vaccine is so important, because it offers us a level of protection.

Mr. Speaker, very little is possible without that level of protection. And very little will be possible in opening up our economy without that level of protection, and we are not there yet. We are close. Government is starting to put things in place to allow us to get

there, such as the SafeKey app. [They] are starting to talk about the next phase and stuff, but we need more people to get vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. I have been vaccinated, as I said. My family has been vaccinated. I listened to the science. I have talked to my doctors.

And what I have done, Mr. Speaker (and I will talk about this for just a very brief moment because I do not want to give it a lot of time and a lot of credibility), . . . while I support those who are against vaccination, I respect their opinion, I listen to reasoned debate. But Mr. Speaker, what I will never do is buy-in to some of the misleading stuff that is going out on social media. And one of the most recent ones is about magnets on people's arms. I have never heard of something so absurd in my life.

I urge Bermudians to get away from social media unless it is a source for good, reliable information. These misleading posts and comments do nothing but set us back and make the hard reality that we face today last longer than it needs to last. We need to open up. We need to open up! We need to open up, Mr. Speaker, as colleagues have talked about for our seniors. Our seniors have been really struggling. It is conversation that a number of colleagues have had today about our seniors. And, yes, they have played an important role in our society and still play an important role. But just think, Mr. Speaker, about our seniors. They have been shut in for the better part of a year because of their concern over COVID-19 and their critical ability to be impacted in a negative way if they manage to catch COVID-19, through no fault of their own, Mr. Speaker.

We need to open up for our seniors because they have been locked up in their houses for too long, living a sheltered life, not being able to get out and about. Not being able to enjoy the golden years. Not being able to travel. We need to open up for our seniors. And so those people who are impeding the opening, need to think about it, Mr. Speaker.

We need to open up for the hospitality industry. Our community, as colleagues have talked about, is built on the back of our hospitality industry. Before we had international business, it was hospitality. In the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s it was hospitality that drove jobs. It drove Bermudian lives. It made many Bermudians successful. They worked two jobs through eight, nine months a year and took three, four months off, Mr. Speaker, and travelled the world. We need to open up for the hospitality industry to get those jobs back again, Mr. Speaker.

People do not want to be home. It is not like in the States. They cannot get people to go back to work because they are making so much money staying home. Bermudians want to work. Bermudians are proud of who we are, proud of what we are as Bermudians. They want to get back to work. We need to open up for the hospitality industry, for the empty hotels that we have.

We need to open up for St. Regis, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased to see the opening of St. Regis tomorrow—four years after the ground was broken in May of 2017, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased to see that this Government and the previous Government have supported St. Regis to allow this first-class hotel to be able to receive their first guests tomorrow. And the golf course, the Five Forts golf course is going to open up, Mr. Speaker.

This is exciting, not only for St. George's to provide opportunity and commerce, but it is exciting for Bermuda because along with the first-class properties we have in the Loren and the Princess Hotel and others (at the risk of missing some names out, Mr. Speaker), it attracts people to Bermuda. We need to open up, Mr. Speaker, because other countries are opening up. Other countries are opening up and people are travelling there. And if we have roadblocks in our way for visitors to come here, they will not come, Mr. Speaker. We need to open up. People need to take the vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, we need to open up for the unemployed. There have been many [unemployed] for so long, Mr. Speaker, that now people are really frustrated. We need to open up for retail, Mr. Speaker. Retail has been making it by on a thread for so long, Mr. Speaker, that we need to open up so that we can have retail vibrant again to support our economy. And while retail numbers over the past couple of months have been pushed up, to me, those are some economic numbers that to some extent, Mr. Speaker, provide a false narrative.

Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Because when you have a captive audience of Bermudians who are here (as some would say, stuck on the rock), they have to purchase everything at the local grocery stores. They have to buy the gas. They have to buy the building supplies. And so some of those areas are up drastically; but many of those areas, Mr. Speaker, are down. And there are thousands of people employed in retail. And many of those people, Mr. Speaker, are out of jobs or working [fewer] hours than they would like to work to be sustainable. So we need to open up.

And I supported the Government in many things that they have done through COVID-19. I have not supported it all, Mr. Speaker. I have had some disagreements with them, but I support the Government in this vaccine drive. And I urge Bermudians to get on with it. If you cannot trust a politician, go talk to your doctor. Listen to the experts, what they have said. One after another doctors have come out, from the hospital doctors to Dr. Arscott, who is an expert in this field [and is] talking about it, Mr. Speaker. And the doctors all across the Island have talked about it.

We need to listen to the experts and get vaccinated because just as quickly as we have moved forward over the past couple of days, and it has been a long haul to get through this second spike that we

have had, and the third spike, Mr. Speaker, which started in mid-March and has waned off now. We could slip again because we do not have enough protection. And the only way we are going to open up is if we have protection, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one area that I have not agreed with Government is this quarantine issue. And I fully appreciate the need to quarantine people for various reasons, Mr. Speaker. But in light of the fact that we live in a very small remote Island and Bermudians have to travel, whether it be for education, whether it be for their job (there are many reasons), whether it be for health care, Mr. Speaker, when Bermudians come back, it is an onerous expense for many Bermudians to have to quarantine at their own expense.

And while I fully understand and appreciate the Government's reasons why they have done this, because there have been those amongst us who have not followed the proper restrictions and regulations and caused a serious problem, there has to be a way, Mr. Speaker, in the world that we live in, in 2021, where we can track people at all times. And we know this Government, and certainly the Premier is very keen on technology. There has to be a way that we can allow people to quarantine at home and be subject to the letter of the law, Mr. Speaker, because some people will not be able to pay that expense. And they will have to travel, whether it is for educational purposes or whether it is for medical purposes.

So, while I fully support the need to quarantine, it is something we have to do to protect ourselves, people need to be responsible. And those amongst us who are not responsible should face the full impact of the regulations and the laws that we have put in place.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the real concerns that people have had through COVID-19 is that through all these restrictions and regulations, that small majority of people . . . small minority of people (sorry, Mr. Speaker) amongst us who have not followed the restrictions or regulations have not been dealt with. And it is not good enough to blame the police or to blame Government House.

I know accountability is tough in a small community because it could be your family, it could be your friend, it could be your next-door neighbour. But we are still in the throes of COVID-19 because too many of us have not held other people accountable when we have known that they have violated the proper protocols. We need to do better than that or else we will continue to slip back and we will continue to have the challenges that we have. We need to open up, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to do it through the vaccine. And so I urge everyone to get on board, listen to the science, and then make their appropriate decision.

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Now, Mr. Speaker, in the couple of minutes that I have left (because I see you looking at your clock), I too want to wish everybody a happy Bermuda Day. I was one of those who did not support the change of date, but that debate is done, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased that the traditional, May 24th race (and I still call it that) is going to run through the great constituency of Smith's North number 10. And I think, perhaps, the most telling part of the race will be Flatts Hill, as we have heard some of the great runners who have talked about the race this year talk about the key parts of the race being Flatts Hill.

So I look forward for that day to enjoy the race, to watch the competition, and to be out and about a bit. It will be strange, Mr. Speaker. It will certainly be strange to be out and about a bit, but to be out and about being safe, following proper protocols, Mr. Speaker. And I want to wish all Bermudians a very happy holiday. I will still call it May 24th.

Remember, let's not get carried away. Let's not get carried away in too much of a good time and let our guard down because as the former Premier Craig Cannonier said once in a debate a couple of months ago, *COVID-19 does not discriminate*. But Bermudians, enjoy the holiday. Stay safe. Stay healthy and look out for your brothers and sisters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Have a pleasant weekend.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if no one else is ready to speak I will close. But I will defer—

The Speaker: Premier, I won't stop you. Go right ahead. You have your 20 minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Can you see me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, I do.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Hon. E. David Burt: I just want to make sure.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank honourable colleagues for contributing to the motion to adjourn. I recognise the last Member who spoke, and I appreciate his words of support for the Government in regard to vaccination. And I would hope that he also channels that internally amongst his own members of the party of which he belongs to, especially one of the members who he elevated to the Senate, another place, a little while ago, who has given the exact op-

posite line in the public sphere, from what he has given.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, because we all know that there are various disagreements that we all have. Some of us support, others do not. But I think what is important is from a perspective of Government and Opposition, if we are going to be united in this, then we should make sure that we hold all of our members to account across the board. And I know that in our party we have made sure that we have taken account of the opinions of all of our members in the construction of our policy. So I would urge the Honourable Member who just spoke and also the Honourable Opposition Leader, of whom I spoke to myself on this very issue, that it is merely hollow in my view to say that you support. I think that you should be very forceful especially [in regard to] those persons who purport to represent your party that they are also on board in not trying to be purposely divisive for the purpose of politics, because you cannot speak with a forked tongue, Mr. Speaker.

And so on the issue of where we stand, we continue to make excellent progress, Mr. Speaker. More than 50 per cent of the population of Bermuda have received two doses of the vaccine. This now puts us in a very rare space inside of the world. And we are the 7th most vaccinated country on the planet. And that is something that we can be proud of. Mr. Speaker, 68 per cent of the eligible population in this country have at least had their first dose of the vaccine. We are seeing that people are going door-to-door around the country making sure.

What is important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that in Bermuda we are fortunate. We are fortunate that we have enough vaccines inside of this country to vaccinate all of the persons who want a vaccination. This cannot be said for many other countries, Mr. Speaker. And it is important to recognise that time, yes, is running out. The Minister of Health has been very clear. After June 8th we are going to have to limit first doses. So it is a rush for us against the clock.

So I am appreciative of the support of Honourable Members, but I also want the people of this country who are listening to know that we are in a unique circumstance. There are many people who do not have what it is that we have. There are many people who wish they could have the choice that we have in this country. So I urge persons who may be delaying—not persons who have made their minds, but persons who may be delaying—to recognise that the delay can only go on for two and a half weeks. At that point in time we will exhaust our supply and we will be in the space where other countries are—waiting sometimes months waiting for their next supply.

In Bermuda we took out an insurance policy. So, we were made aware that we were getting supplies from United Kingdom, but we want to make sure that we took out an insurance policy, so we also got supplies from the COVAX Facility [COVID-19 Vaccine

Global Access Facility]. The COVAX Facility certainly did deliver their initial set of vaccines to Bermuda. And because we have an overabundance of those vaccines, we are going to be donating our excess vaccine that we have to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. And I received the call from the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago who thanked us for our generous donation.

But I think what is important, Mr. Speaker, is to recognise why they need these donations. Because they are a country that has been ravaged, just like we have seen in our recent history, by the importation of a new variant, in their case the Brazilian P.1 variant, which has caused their health care system to be near capacity, which has caused countless deaths, and which has caused their economy to have to shut down. We know what that feels like and we do not want to go back there again.

So I say this before I move on to happier parts of my motion to adjourn. There is one place where the Government is singularly committed. And there is one place where this governing party is singularly committed, and that is that we know that persons who voted for us in October want us to execute on the agenda that we laid out in front of the people. And the realities are, Mr. Speaker, that it is impossible for a government to execute an agenda if all of our time is spent battling a once-in-a-century pandemic.

Those are the facts. So if we want to move on, if we want to deal with the matters that are important to the everyday citizens, if we want to deal with the matters of enfranchising Bermuda, if we want to deal with the matters of addressing social equity, if we want to deal with the matters of increasing access to capital, if we want to deal with the matters of educational reform, dealing with the cost of living, dealing with the health care reform, those things cannot be done at pace if we are occupying our time in battling a pandemic.

We have seen the danger with the introduction of a new variant into our country. And I think that whatever side of the debate you are on, whether you are pro vaccine, antivaccine, whether you believe that this is really a pandemic or as some people call it, a *plandemic*, what we all know is that people are dying, health care systems are being overrun and none of us wants to find ourselves at the end of this year or next year doing this all over again. We are committed to moving beyond the pandemic.

And as a country we have to look at ourselves, look at the lessons we have seen of what other countries have done, how they have been successful, and apply those here. As an island we have a unique ability to protect our borders and make sure that we remain insulated. And we can do it in a fashion using technology and using the resources that we have to be a success.

So as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is critically important for all persons to recognise

and understand that the decisions that this Government has made and has to make are difficult, but we are not making these decisions because we want to penalise, because we want to punish, because we want to disenfranchise anyone. We are making these decisions because we know that this country requires transformation. And we cannot transform this country if all of our energies are spent battling a pandemic which requires economic challenges in order to make sure that we preserve life.

In this latest outbreak, Mr. Speaker, we have lost 20 of our fellow Bermudians. Twenty, Mr. Speaker! Almost double the amount that we lost in the entirety of the pandemic beforehand, Mr. Speaker. We do not want to have to go through that again. And that is the reason why we have taken the steps which are necessary. But when we look at that, Mr. Speaker, we look at *What does life look like when a country is successful in moving beyond the pandemic?*

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. E. David Burt: And lots of Members have spoken about Bermuda Day. Next week, Friday, a large group exemption has been issued and [printed] in the official *Gazette* which will show a glimpse of the future, where persons will be gathered inside of a stadium—the largest gathering of people since the pandemic began in Bermuda (save and except from the Black Lives Matter marches), Mr. Speaker. And we will be there to celebrate Bermuda Day. It is a glimpse of the future and what is necessary and required to move beyond the pandemic, Mr. Speaker. And so as we look toward having our traditions return this year, whether it is the Bermuda Day Half Marathon Derby, the bicycle race, or the Bermuda Day Parade, which will be different, but we will still have an event this year, it is important to recognise, Mr. Speaker, that through our collective work, due to the fact that our citizens have stepped up to the plate to make us 7th in the world, due to the fact that our infections are falling and dropping and have continued to fall and our active cases are now below 100 (I think 86 at last count), and hopefully continue to drop more today and over the weekend, we have turned the corner.

We cannot forget that we can regress very quickly. But what we also have to remember is that we can move forward with confidence. Bermuda Day is just the start. I am committed to working with the cricket clubs of this country. And the Minister of Youth, Culture and Sport has confirmed that cricket will restart. Cricket restart is a prerequisite to having our annual Cup Match Classic, celebration of Emancipation Day, and celebration of Mary Prince Day, Mr. Speaker. We are confident that we will be able to do that.

We are confident that we will be able to restart our tourism season and we are confident, although

there was a minor setback with Royal Caribbean, and the headlines say that homeporting is done, that is not true because the Viking ship will arrive. And they will still be homeporting from here. We are making advances and we are doing what is necessary to show this country that we can be innovative and survive beyond the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

And so Honourable Members, the next time we will see each other will be on June 4th. Hopefully, we might be able to use technology to meet all in person, again, and move past virtual gatherings. But if we are not, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that Honourable Members in between that time will enjoy this Bermuda Day, will ensure that they take in the sights and the sounds, and continue to remind their constituents that we are not beyond this pandemic yet.

There is work to do. But it is a demonstration that if we all unite and do what is necessary, Bermuda can still be a shining example on how you face down variants, on how you act collectively and decisively in order to defeat those variants, and how you make sure you change your behaviour following to make sure that you do not repeat the same mistake again, Mr. Speaker.

I wish all Members a happy Bermuda Day. I wish all the participants of the Bermuda Day festivities the best. I thank them for stepping forward. I thank the organisers for working with the Government to make sure that we can make these events safe and to reduce the risk. I thank all the people who work behind the scenes to get the technology ready so that we can do these events and have hope for the future. This Government wants to move beyond the pandemic so that we can do what is necessary to deliver on what the voters sent us to do on October 1st.

I look forward to our next debate where we can talk about our economic recovery plan and share with this country what we are going to do to ensure that this economy is rebuilt with Bermudians at heart and we take advantage of this unique opportunity to redress significant historical challenges of which we had. That is what we were elected to do, Mr. Speaker, and that is what this Government will deliver on.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a very happy Bermuda Day and have a wonderful, wonderful weekend.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Thank you, Members, for your contributions today, and thank you for allowing us to bring this debate to a conclusion today at a very reasonable hour.

I trust that you all will have a very safe weekend and a safe holiday next week. Best wishes to you and your family during that holiday period.

With that, the House now stands adjourned.

[At 5:01 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 4 June 2021.]

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
4 JUNE 2021
10:00 AM***Sitting Number 19 of the 2020/2021 Session*

The Speaker: Members, we are now about to start the House.

Ms. Beale, would you like to lead us in prayer?

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]

The Speaker: Members, we are now in session for this sitting. Thank you for the prayers, Ms. Beale.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 21 May 2021]

The Speaker: The Minutes from the 21st of May have been circulated. Are there any amendments to be made?

There are none.

The Minutes will be reported as printed.

[Minutes of 21 May 2021 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: There are none.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: Members, we have some 11 papers or communications to be done at this point. The first is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, would you like to present your communication at this time?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to Members and the listening public.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**ELECTRICITY (LICENCE THRESHOLD)
TEMPORARY AMENDMENT
REGULATIONS 2021****FISHERIES (FISH POTS) AMENDMENT
REGULATIONS 2021**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Electricity (Licence Threshold) Temporary Amendment Regulations 2021 and the Fisheries (Fish Pots) Amendment Regulations 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

The next is in the name of the . . . I believe there are a few of them here, all in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister of Finance, would you like to present your matters at this time?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes, thank you.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (REFUND)
(TEMPORARY) REGULATIONS 2021**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the National Pension Scheme (Refund) (Temporary) Regulations 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by sections 24(9)(b) and 69(2) of the National Pension Schemes (Occupational Pensions) Act 1968.

The Speaker: Thank you. Do the next ones.

**BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY
ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

**BERMUDA PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

**BERMUDA PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ENDING
MARCH 31, 2020**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the following:

- Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2020;
- Bermuda Public Accountability Board Annual Report 2020; and
- Bermuda Public Accountability Board Financial Statements Ending March 31, 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Continue with your next.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That is it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Ah! Okay. Thank you. [You] got ahead of me that time. No problem.

The next will be in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister of Works, I believe you have two as well.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**EXCHANGE OF LAND AGREEMENT BETWEEN
CORPORATION OF HAMILTON AND HAMILTON
WAREHOUSE COMPANY LIMITED**

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes, I do.

The first one is, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Exchange of Land Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited, reference areas the land situated in the City of Hamilton in the Islands of Bermuda as described in the First Schedule hereto comprising 23.6 square feet and 107.4 square feet, respectively, hatched in yellow on the plan annexed hereto and marked Plan B that the applicants will swear to, if any, and subject to the matters described therein and in accordance with the provisions of section 20(1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923.

The Speaker: Thank you.

**SALE AND PURCHASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
CORPORATION OF HAMILTON AND ARNOLD'S
DISCOUNT LIMITED**

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And the second one is, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Sale and Purchase Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Arnold's Discount Limited, reference areas of all of that triangular parcel of land measuring 358 square feet situated in the Islands of Bermuda, together with the appurtenances thereto and the dwellings directed thereon or on part thereof and known as land adjacent to 20 North Street, City of Hamilton, HM 12, and as described in the Schedule annexed and hatched in red on the plan, also annexed hereto, and in accordance with the provisions of section 20(1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next item is in the name of the Minister of Health, Minister Wilson.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY
EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021**

Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 3) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next two items are in the name of the Minister of National Security.

You can present your items.

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

PAROLE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020

**TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS BOARD
(TOOB) REPORT 2020**

Hon. Renee Ming: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Parole Board Report 2020 and the Treatment of Offenders Board (TOOB) Report for 2020.

The Speaker: Thank you, Ministers, for tabling those reports this morning.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: Members, we have listed six Statements; however, four or five are going to be given this morning. The Minister of Labour has withdrawn his Statement at this time.

So the first Statement this morning is from the Minister of Education.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

TEACHER CERTIFICATION BONDED LOAN

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise before you and my honourable colleagues to share a new initiative that the Ministry is putting in place to support Bermudians pursuing a career in the teaching profession to become a qualified educator.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more noble profession than that of a teacher. Teaching is the only profession that teaches all other professions. As we continue on our path to reform education, reform must involve everything from the upgrade of facilities, provision for professional development for our educators and a revised system of governance. This Government has committed to providing our children with a system that will allow them to realise their true potential.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has always stated that financial means should not be a barrier to achieving one's educational goals. Since 2017, we have committed to ensuring that as much funding as possible has been provided for students pursuing higher education. From the \$300,000 annual grant to the Bermuda College that has helped almost 1,000 students to date to how we have managed to maintain the 2021 scholarships and awards budget at the same 2020 level—even in this COVID-19 era of forced austerity, we have made funding for Bermudians who seek to better themselves a priority.

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to inform my honourable colleagues of yet another programme designed to help Bermudians realise their educational dreams. In September 2021, the Ministry of Education will offer for the first time a [Teacher Certification](#)

[Bonded Loan](#). The purpose of this loan is to provide financial support to Bermudian residents who are enrolled in an approved and accredited distance-learning teacher certification programme. Another one of the many steps in the right direction is to ensure that opportunities exist for Bermudians to follow their dreams of becoming qualified teachers.

Mr. Speaker, let me first share that, as per the Bermuda Educators Council Act 2002, a person is a qualified educator if they hold a university degree or an equivalent qualification granted by an institution recognised by the Bermuda Educators Council [BEC or the Council] and they have successfully completed a course of initial training for teachers in schools at an institution recognised by the Council. In support of ensuring the public school system has qualified educators, a key outcome in Plan 2022 Priority 3, Enhancing the Quality of Teaching Practice, is that 90 per cent of teachers are certified in their assigned field. We are diligently working towards achieving that outcome.

Mr. Speaker, as a backdrop, every year the public school system experiences shortages, for various reasons, of qualified teachers for specific subject areas. Some of the perennially difficult-to-fill teaching positions are in the subject areas of music, drama, physical education, mathematics, English and foreign languages. To help fill these teaching positions, a BEC Exemption Committee legislated under the Bermuda Educators Council Act provides recommendations to the Minister of Education for persons to be exempted from teaching these subjects at schools. However, they do not hold the prerequisite teaching qualifications as stipulated by the Bermuda Educators Council Act.

Mr. Speaker, while exemptions are provided to persons to teach in the education system, we must have genuinely qualified educators. Therefore, persons who receive an exemption to teach in our schools must commit to pursuing a teaching certification within a specified time for the exemption status to continue. As a result, we have persons who have been granted exemptions to teach in the system and who are simultaneously pursuing their teaching certification.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are two university teaching certification programmes that persons who live on Island commonly enrol in to undertake their teaching certification through distance learning. The Bermuda College, in agreement with the University of the West Indies [UWI], provides a Teaching Certification Programme [TCP] in Mathematics, English Language, Information Technology, Science, Modern Languages, History and Social Studies/Geography Education. The UK Sunderland University also offers a teaching certification distance-learning programme in various subject specialisations, where persons apply directly to the university for enrolment.

The Teacher Certification Programme broadly comprises undertaking subject-focused coursework leading towards a degree specialisation, and participating in a 12-week teaching practicum assessed for successful passing. The teaching practicum, as I understand, refers to persons teaching children subject matter content in the classroom and demonstrating classroom leadership and management. This results in persons achieving a teaching certification and being recognised as a qualified educator.

Mr. Speaker, the 12-week teaching practicum is considered a period of study, not employment, that parallels that of an overseas student who undertakes a teaching practicum programme. Therefore, during this period exempted-status persons are not remunerated. This has become financially challenging for persons enrolled in the teaching certification programme who also have to uphold their household fiscal responsibilities while adhering to the Teaching Certification Programme's deadline. Consequently, we have seen promising potential teachers opt to pursue employment elsewhere rather than finish their teaching certification. This year alone has seen four students, three of whom are male, in the UWI programme postpone their pursuit of a teaching certification due to this financial barrier.

Mr. Speaker, since becoming the Minister of Education I have personally seen promising teachers opt to postpone or give up on pursuing their qualification due to the inability to navigate the 12-week practicum with no income. To address this issue, last summer I tasked the Board of Education to create a new pathway to help enhance the recruitment and development of new teachers. In response, they developed a Teacher Certification Bonded Loan career development policy that supports the Bermudianisation of teachers in the education system by providing limited financial assistance for career-transferring professionals to become certified teachers. While this policy was initially developed to assist persons with exempted teaching status, let me be clear that this policy also covers anyone currently in the public school system interested in pursuing a teacher's certification.

Mr. Speaker, the loss of a salary while completing a 12-week teaching practicum has become a roadblock for persons who have decided to change professions and pursue a career in teaching. By affording a bonded loan to cover living expenses during these 12 weeks, persons will be able to focus on their teaching practicum experience and complete their teaching certification without significant financial impediment.

Mr. Speaker, the Teacher Certification Bonded Loan is valued at up to \$4,800 per month for three months. The applicant will be required to work for the Bermuda Public School System [BPSS] for a minimum of three years during which the loan will be paid back through regular deductions from their salary. Applicants will be provided upfront with the various op-

tions available for borrowing and repaying the loan to make an informed decision of how much they can reasonably afford to borrow.

Mr. Speaker, the bonded loan application process requires the applicant to

- be a Bermudian;
- reside locally;
- be 25 years of age or older;
- already be enrolled in an approved and accredited long-distance teaching certification programme;
- be pursuing an area of study needed in the public school system;
- agree to work in the public school system for a minimum of three years upon receiving their certification; and
- be able to effect a bond signed by two sureties.

The Teacher's Certification Bonded Loan offering will come into effect in September 2021, and the guidelines for applying for the bonded loan and the application form will be accessed on the government's <https://forms.gov.bm> website.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me emphasise that this initiative is to support our Bermudians who are committed to the education of our children and are pursuing a career in the teaching profession. Therefore, we encourage those currently exempted to teach in the public school system and anyone else in the BPSS seeking a teacher's certification who may need financial support during their 12-week practicum to take advantage of this initiative. We look forward to continuing efforts to support the Bermudianisation of teachers in the education system and ensuring all teachers are qualified educators. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning on the Order Paper is in the name of the Minister of Transport Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

SATA AZORES AIRLINES

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this Honourable House that on the 13th of June 2021 Bermuda will welcome [Azores Airlines](#) [previously known as SATA Internacional] for their inaugural flight from the Azores. This flight will be the first in a series of Azores Airlines charter flights until September 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Portuguese nationals have been on our shores for over 170 years, with most of the initial persons coming from the Azores. As such, Ber-

muda has long-standing ties with Portugal, and today Bermudians of Portuguese heritage contribute to every aspect of life in Bermuda and form part of the Island's cultural fabric. This nonstop route will increase opportunities for inbound tourism and for Bermuda residents to travel to the Azores and connect to eight other islands, Europe and beyond, and reunite with family and friends. The success of this summer's non-stop air route between Bermuda and Azores could lead to a regularly scheduled flight between our two countries.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport has embarked on a campaign to serve the underserved traveller within our community, using the various demographics that make up the tapestry of Bermudian culture to determine which new routes and destinations to explore next. In addition to the Azores, the Ministry is exploring air service development opportunities between Bermuda and the Caribbean, and also Bermuda and the Far East.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister.

RESCINDING OF THE APPROVAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF SANDYS 360

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House of the rescinding of the approval granted to the Government of Bermuda to purchase from the Trustees of the Sandys Secondary School for a purchase price of BD\$1 million for the unencumbered freehold interest of the 2.5 acres, namely, lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 situated at the site of Sandys Secondary Middle School.

Mr. Speaker, let me first declare my double interest: (1) I am an alumni of Sandys Secondary School; and (2) as you will know, Mr. Speaker, my great aunt, Nurse Alice Scott, was one of the founders of Sandys Secondary School.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that a draft purchase and sale agreement was tabled on the 23rd of February 2018 and was debated and approved on March 5, 2018. The approval included the purchase of the [Sandys 360](#) Sports and Aquatic Centre at 21 Broome Street, Sandys.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the House will recall that the trustees owed some \$9.24 million to HSBC Bank of Bermuda Limited for the construction of the centre and were unable to repay the debt. HSBC had initially offered the debt to government, which was ultimately declined. Mr. Speaker, at one point a Cabinet sub-committee was formed to include the Attorney General; and Ministers of Public Works, Community, Culture and Sports, Education,

and Economic Development to look at options. This Cabinet subcommittee met and considered options, and in the end were of the view that the property is of such operational significance to the school and the Sandys community that government should consider purchasing it from the trustees.

Mr. Speaker, the centre comprised a 25-meter indoor pool, basketball court/hall, gymnasium and gym classrooms. The mission of the centre was to strive to create healthy and positive young people, adults, seniors and families through the community by providing a gathering place and a full range of programmes in education, sport, aquatic, health and recreation via a campus-based community centre. The facility also focuses on community development, serving as a hub for the community.

Mr. Speaker, since March 2018 the Government has worked tirelessly to advance the sale, but the trustees' lawyers and HSBC have not been able to agree on the final dollar amount since there was an outstanding debt with a contractor (BCM McAlpine Ltd.) that had not been satisfied. Mr. Speaker, this outstanding matter continuously delayed the advancement of the sale, and given the current economic climate it has been determined that it is in the best interests of the government to rescind the purchase approval.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge the long and proud history of the school, which was founded in 1927 by community members as the first secondary school open to Black students living in the West End. The property was donated by generous community-minded individuals who wished to ensure equal access to secondary education to Black students.

While we do not take this decision lightly—after three years of trying—the economic climate is a lot different than three years ago. And so the Government makes this decision with regret, but in the belief that it is the right thing to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next two Statements this morning are in the name of the Minister of National Security.

Minister would you like to do your first Statement?

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

THE PAROLE BOARD REPORT 2020

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to the Legislature the [Parole Board Annual Report 2020](#), as prescribed by section 8 of the Parole Board Act 2001. The annual report provides an overview of the decisions of the board for the year and

offers suggestions and observations for the continued efficient delivery of Bermuda's parole regime.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Parole Board is an independent body appointed by the Minister of National Security, empowered to make decisions governing the time and conditions of release of inmates from Bermuda's correctional facilities. In making its decisions, the board must assess the risk offenders pose to the community and to themselves. Additionally, the Board evaluates the likelihood that a period of supervision upon release will contribute to the successful reintegration of the offender into the community.

Mr. Speaker, the board is mandated to meet with all inmates who are eligible for parole three months prior to their parole eligibility date. During 2020 the board conducted 123 parole reviews and released 15 persons for parole during the period, 4 of whom were fitted with an electronic monitoring device as part of their special condition. There were no denials of parole; however, one individual was recalled. And 84 individuals had their parole decision deferred.

Mr. Speaker, 43 inmates chose to decline parole. While some of these individuals expressed a desire to complete prison rehabilitation programmes, more often parole was declined due to an approaching earliest release date. Honourable Members will recall that inmates are traditionally eligible for release following completion of one-third of their court-ordered custodial period, barring no other court stipulations are awarded and no infractions against prison rules are documented.

Mr. Speaker, parole provides inmates with an opportunity for a supported re-entry into society. With tools to assist in transition back into the community, former inmates are less likely to reoffend. The stipulations of a formal parole order and the guidance of a parole officer assist former inmates with maintaining suitable housing and employment. Additionally, community-based treatment, fiscal planning, and family reunification provide increased levels of support for the parolees when compared to those released with no supervision order.

Mr. Speaker, suitable housing and appropriate employment or education pursuits are the two elementary requirements for parole. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, all parolees released during 2020 were able to obtain suitable employment. During 2020 there were seven foreign nationals incarcerated. Although foreign nationals are given the same consideration as locals in parole decisions, it is more difficult for foreign nationals to meet employment and housing criteria due to work permit requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the work of the board was only minimally impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Site visits to the correctional facility were suspended; however, the Board conducted 36 meetings at the Westgate Corrections Facility, Farm Facility and the Co-Ed Facility on the

scheduled meeting dates. The board has utilised the government's Webex platform to meet virtually with potential parolees.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to the board for bringing to my attention their thoughts and observations on issues that could affect Bermuda's parole regime going forward. The board notes that there may be some difficulties with eligible inmates securing employment during the post COVID-19 economic recovery. There are many employers who consistently take a chance and employ these individuals, giving them a fair chance at a successful re-entry. I would encourage all employers to consider assisting with the reintegration of parolees by hiring them as they are able.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the board, led by Chairperson, the Honourable Derrick V. Burgess, JP, MP, for their diligent service. Parole is an important part of the Corrections Department's programme. When released, parolees become our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends. The work of the board ensures that those eligible for release are supported through their reintegration process.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to lay the Parole Board 2020 Annual Report before this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Minister, would you like to do your second Statement?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS BOARD (TOOB) REPORT 2020

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to introduce to the Legislature the [Treatment of Offenders Board Annual Report 2020](#), as prescribed by Section 8 of the Treatment of Offenders Board Act and Rule 170 of the Prison Rules 1980. The Annual Report provides an overview of the work of the Treatment of Offenders Board (commonly called TOOB), including statistics on inmate adjudications and other recommendations for improvements to Bermuda's correctional facilities and programmes.

Mr. Speaker, much of the work of the TOOB involves visiting the inmate population at the Westgate Correctional Facility, Co-Ed Correctional Facility, the Prison Farm Facility and the Right Living House Rehabilitation Programme. Ordinarily, monthly rota visits are conducted by two or more members of the board. These visits allow the board to conduct site visits and meet with the both the inmates and the Corrections Department's administration to address any issues or ongoing concerns regarding inmate safety and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, as has been a theme this year, these visits were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The TOOB has conducted virtual interviews to keep abreast of the day-to-day functions of the facilities from the inmates' perspectives. The TOOB Report 2020 highlights some of the negative effects that the pandemic has had on the prison population. The board reports that the suspension of in-person visits and various other activities has resulted in increased frustrations within the facility. The Department of Corrections continues to work to mitigate increased tension within the facilities, specifically at Westgate.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020 there were 55 adjudications conducted at the Westgate Correctional Facility. There were no adjudications at either the Co-Ed or Farm Facilities. Approximately 40 per cent of these adjudications were in relation to prison rule infractions involving unauthorised articles—typically, mobile phones and related parts. This is a 5 per cent increase over mobile phone-related adjudications in 2019. The board reports that 13 per cent of adjudications involved assaults on inmates or corrections officers. The board attributes much of these offences to increased tensions, coupled with the added restrictions of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn to the board's observations of the infrastructure of the facilities. The board notes that all of the facilities require maintenance primarily due to the ageing of the buildings. The condition of the facilities has a direct impact on the attitudes of the inmate population. Budget constraints are an ongoing factor; however, the Department of Corrections administration continues to liaise with the Ministry of Public Works to complete upgrades and improvements to the facilities. Most recently, a contract has been awarded for the supply of replacement security doors at the Westgate and Co-Ed Facilities. Installation work will commence once the doors have arrived on Island.

Additionally, I am pleased to report that a second hot water heater was installed at Westgate, resolving the contentious issue of a lack of sufficient hot water for inmate use.

Mr. Speaker, I remain grateful for the work of all of the members of the Treatment of Offenders Board, led by Chairperson, Ms. Zayna Foggo. The board has managed to carry out its duties while navigating COVID-19 restrictions. I am optimistic that as we move forward post COVID-19 the board will once again be able to visit our correctional facilities to strengthen its relationship with the inmate population in order to ensure the safety and well-being of those housed in the facilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: As we all know, we have 60 minutes for the Question Period. And the time now is 10:32. And we are going to start this morning with the written questions. There are a series of written questions for Ministers. The first written question this morning is from the Opposition Leader to the Minister of Finance.

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

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Given that the Government of Bermuda has a seat on the Board of Directors of the Bermuda Infrastructure Fund in exchange for a guarantee—

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, we hear you, but we do not see you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: How about now?

The Speaker: Now we do.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Want me to start again?

The Speaker: Go ahead. Continue.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will start again.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND/CAPITAL RAISED

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Given that the Government of Bermuda has a seat on the Board of Directors of the Bermuda Infrastructure Fund in exchange for a guarantee of the minimum management fee paid to the fund manager, will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the value of the capital raised by the fund to date, and the names and amounts invested by each shareholder?

The Speaker: Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Sorry.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Are we at Parliamentary Questions?

The Speaker: Yes. Parliamentary Questions.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Okay.

The Speaker: The first written question from the Opposition Leader was just read out to you, and you need to supply the answer for that.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: [All right]. Yes, as best as I can.

The Bermuda Infrastructure Fund commenced operations on the 27th of April of 2018. The fund has raised approximately \$88 million of capital commitments from limited partners, including a \$3 million equity commitment from the Government of Bermuda. The fund has 10 limited partners including the Government of Bermuda, and one general partner. As per the limited partner agreement, we cannot disclose names and commitment amounts of individual limited partners in the fund.

That is the response.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. I accept that. Second question.

The Speaker: No supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No.

The Speaker: Okay. Second question.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND/INVESTMENT VALUE

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House of the full details and the dollar value of each investment that the Bermuda Infrastructure Fund has made into Bermuda's infrastructure projects from inception to date?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: To date the fund has invested, committed to invest or targeted to invest \$21.6 million into three separate investments. The first is Rugged Rentals, which is a start-up miniature electric vehicle rental business. It is a fleet of 20 vehicles growing to 50 vehicles by year end. The company provides tourists and Bermudians alike a lower-cost, environmentally friendly transportation option. The fund has invested \$866,000 of a total \$1.5 million commitment.

The second is Horizon Communications, which is a start-up wireless Internet service provider offering faster and more reliable Internet to Bermuda at a lower cost than the incumbents. Total investment is expected to be approximately \$11 million. To date the fund has loaned \$1.6 million to Horizon to begin installing equipment and in May funded \$4.9 million while obtaining the change-of-control approval from the Bermuda Regulatory Authority. The remaining will be funded if and when they obtain a spectrum licence.

The third is the Bermuda Airport Solar Project, which is an acquisition of a 6-megawatt solar power facility developed by Saturn Power on the Finger of the Bermuda Airport. The project has a 20-year agreement with BELCO to sell all of the electricity it generates, providing an alternative, renewable and lower-cost source of power to Bermuda. The fund has signed a letter of intent to acquire the project for \$9.1 million and is expeditiously working towards definitive documents and commissioning of the project. The deal is expected to close in June of 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Put your first supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister indicated that the fund had committed to \$21.6 million. How much have they actually paid or actually invested at this point?

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I just provided the sums of the parts of that [which] answer those numbers in my answers previously. I mentioned the amounts that have been committed to and spent on Rugged Rentals, Horizon Communications and the Bermuda Airport Solar Project.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. So that must be \$866,000 for the Rugged [Rentals], the \$1.6 [million] for Horizon.

And can you repeat the one for the Airport Solar Project, the commitment?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: It is \$9.1 million.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Do you have a further supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Minister provide details on any pending applications that are up for review and approval?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Inasmuch as there are opportunities that are being considered by the fund, I think it would be inappropriate at this point to provide any names and any data on those opportunities because they have not yet reached conclusion.

It is appropriate at some point in time, once those deals are consummated (if they are) that I advise the Honourable Member should he put a question to me.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. So let me just ask a supplementary.

The Speaker: Well, no. You have had your two supplementals.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Speaker: So you can move on to your third question.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My third question is—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I have a question.

The Speaker: You have a supplemental on that particular question? MP Dunkley would like to put a supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Honourable Minister in regard to this question, can the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the length of time each investment is valid for?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: In the private equity space, typically—and I would put the word “typically” in quotation marks—deals are entered into. And once they have been fully funded or are being executed on by their respective management teams, the underlying investors take a very opportunistic view towards harvesting those investments. Inasmuch as there may be a potential prospective buyer or an exit opportunity that may manifest itself in six months, in eighteen months, in twelve months, ten years, they will—

[Inaudible interjections/Feedback]

The Speaker: Opposition Leader. Opposition Leader, can you mute yourself while the other MP puts his questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I can. Sorry.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, just finish your question.

[Crosstalk/Feedback]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: —the Opposition Leader’s background conversation. Let me finish the answer.

The underlying managers will decide for themselves whenever it is optimal for them to liquidate an investment. Typically, the funds have an advertised life of around 10 years. But the general partner [GP] also built into the partnership agreement the ability to extend the life of the fund for one or two additional periods. The length of those periods depends on the underlying agreement struck between the GP and the LPs [limited partners].

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, that is it on this question.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Opposition Leader, would you like to do your third question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, supplementary. MP Pearman.

The Speaker: Oh, supplementary? MP Pearman has a supplementary on this second question.

Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable Minister, the Opposition Leader asked you about the applications that were being made for monies to be released from the funds. And you said you could not identify the applicants or what they were about.

Are you able to tell this Honourable House how many applications are pending?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I believe the question that I answered was, *Can I advise the Honourable House of those transactions that are pending or under consideration?* I cannot. Similarly, I cannot talk to what is being considered by the managers. The Government of Bermuda is a limited partner. It is not the general partner and therefore is not responsible for the valuation and the selection of investment of opportunities that the GP decides to invest in, much

like any other limited partner. That is a matter purely within the remit of the general partner.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, you gave a figure. I think I heard you say \$26 million. Forgive me if I got the number wrong. Is that the complete amount in the fund?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I mentioned that there were . . . so the way these funds work is they go around in their fundraising activities and solicit interest from prospective investors to provide a commitment to invest in the fund. The fund then goes out and identifies investment opportunities. Inasmuch as an opportunity is identified, processed and agreed by the general partner to be an investment to move forward with, it then goes back to the limited partners and says, *Your pro rata share of the capital required for this transaction is "X."* And so commitments get drawn down over the course of time as investment opportunities are identified and put up for funding.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry. Honourable Minister, I do not think you actually answered the question I posed. The question is whether the \$26 million figure was the "X" you just described—i.e., the government's responsibility—or whether it was the total amount in the fund.
Thank you.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: What I mentioned is that there were \$88 million of commitments and that \$21.6 million have been targeted to invest in three separate opportunities.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, would you like to put your third question now? You are muted. We cannot hear you. You have got to unmute yourself.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am unmuted.

The Speaker: Yes. We can hear you now.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA INFRASTRUCTURE FUND/TOTAL LIABILITY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the total liability and the amount paid in management fees by the

Government and the Bermuda Infrastructure Fund to the fund manager and its general partners from inception to date, by year?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The total liability, Mr. Speaker, is \$3 million, and the amount paid in management fees is \$500,000 for each of the following years: 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 for a total of \$2 million to date.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. That is it, thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.
MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you like to put your supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, supplementary.

You just identified the annual payments over a period of the four years at \$500,000 a year. Will that amount change in future years?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Not that I am aware of, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
No further supplementaries?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No further supplementary from me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is the close of the written questions from the Opposition Leader to the Minister of Finance.

The next written question this morning is from the Opposition Leader to the Premier.
Opposition Leader.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION/BUSINESSES RECEIVING GRANTS OR LOANS

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform and update this Honourable House on the number of businesses which have taken part in

receiving a loan/grant under the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation [BEDC] under the Business Continuity & Sustainability Funding Programme, and what is the breakdown for the total value of the loans and the total value of the grants provided under this programme from inception?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, in response to the Opposition Leader's question, total funding deployed through all various COVID-19 funding support projects thus far is \$3,789,497.75, with 225 business applications being approved. As of May the 31st, 2021, the BEDC has approved 160 business applications under the COVID-19 Business Continuity & Sustainability Funding Programme combined of loans, grants, and loan and overdraft guarantees. A breakdown of these figures is as follows:

- \$3,431,149.10 in total funding has been deployed;
- \$2,157,917.30 in loan funding;
- \$1,086,231.80 in grant funding; and
- \$197,000 in loans and overdraft guarantees.

As of May the 31st, 2021, the BEDC has also approved 65 business applications under the COVID-19 Emergency Grant Funding Programme, and \$358,348.65 has been deployed in grant funding.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Premier provide details on the number of pending applications and the number of outstanding applications that have yet to be addressed?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, as per Standing Orders, that information is not with me. So I am personally happy to provide it later. It was not a part of the question, so I do not have the information.

The Speaker: Okay.

Opposition Leader, that was not originally what he was expecting, so he did not have that infor-

mation. The Premier has indicated he will provide it at a later date.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I will accept that.

The Speaker: Would you like to do your second question now?

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION/REQUIREMENTS FOR LOANS OR GRANTS

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what is required to apply for the grants or loans from BEDC, and if this process has had an impact on the actual sustainability of the small and medium size businesses applying for funding?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

In regard to the first part of the question, the information is in the public domain. It is there where anyone can see what is required by going to BEDC's website. The impact of this programme on businesses cannot be understated, which is funding provided through the BEDC Business Continuity & Sustainability Funding Programme and the Emergency Grant Funding Programme. Certainly without this support, many of the small and medium-sized businesses that the BEDC has supported have expressed their thanks for the financing and that they would not know if they would be able to sustain and continue if that funding was not available.

The BEDC was fully aware that the initial financing in fiscal year 2020/21 was triage financing to help businesses tread water through the length of the impact of COVID-19 on the Island and that many businesses would need to reapply for additional funding support in fiscal year 2021/22 to continue to [IN-AUDIBLE]. The BEDC is beginning to see those reapplications start to come through now.

It is important to note that, as best as is possible, the BEDC does process an application and also while conducting that processing conducts an analysis of the viability of the business to continue and advises that the business can pivot or provide strategies where it can. And so it is important to note that all of the requirements that are part of the application process are to help to make sure that the loans and grants that are given ensure the business to be sustainable.

It is important to note that since this programme began, the funding support as of April 2020, out of the 225 approvals to date, only one business thus far has indicated that they have closed down.

And they repaid their loan back to the BEDC prior to closing.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Opposition Leader.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. Question 3.

The Speaker: Yes.

**QUESTION 3: BERMUDA ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION/TOTAL AMOUNT
BUDGETED**

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the total amount budgeted for the economic support from inception of the programme; and is there any intention to increase the budgeted amount; and if so, by how much?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, a \$12 million grant was provided by the Ministry of Finance in the COVID-19 funding support across all funding projects from April 2020. There is no intent at this point to increase the budget amount. And then funding is still available within the grant for the 2021/22 fiscal year.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So the \$12 million was granted. Is that the budgeted amount and granted amount, or is it just the budgeted amount?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated in my statement, and of course as also, I think, done in previous matters before this House, that is the grant amount. And that money has been granted from the Ministry of Finance to the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I think I am asking the question unclearly.
Is the granted amount the budgeted amount?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

The Speaker: Is the granted amount the budgeted amount? Is that what you are asking?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: And the Premier's response is yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: He said yes? Okay. Thank you very much. That is it for me.

The Speaker: No supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that brings us to a close of that second written series of questions.

The third written question is from MP Jackson to Minister Burch. However, the response was not for an oral response, but for a written response. And I believe that the Minister has supplied that [written response](#) already to MP Jackson.

Am I correct, MP Jackson?

**QUESTION: BERMUDIANA BEACH RESORT
CONTRACTORS/SUPPLIERS**

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House a written list of all of the contractors engaged in Bermudiana Beach Resort redevelopment, renovation, furnishing and maintenance of the property?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is correct. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. We will now move on to the questions from the Statements given this morning. And each of the Ministers has a question that has been indicated by Members. And we are going to start with the Minister of Education.

And Minister of Education, you have a question from MP Jackson.

But I also want to make note that at just about eleven o'clock MP Swan will sit in from the Panel of Chairs to chair the session, as I have to step out from the Chair momentarily. So he will step in when I do step out. And, Members, just note that the Question Period will end at 11:32.

But, MP Jackson, you can put your question to the Minister of Education now.

**QUESTION 1: TEACHER CERTIFICATION BONDED
LOAN**

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. And thank you, Minister of Education for this most generous opportunity for those who are studying to become certified in teaching. And I believe that it will be a wonderful way to help to evolve the profession in Bermuda.

My question is a very simple one. But is there a cap on the number of the bonded loans that will be provided? So are we only providing it to those teachers who are in the system now, who are studying? Or are we offering it to anybody in the system who would like to? Do we have a cap on the number of loans that we are looking to provide?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that, MP Jackson. It is actually a very interesting question.

This is a scheme being offered. As I said in the Statement, initially it was thought of just exempted teachers we were looking at because they were the ones who were required to have a scheme in place that would lead to their being certified in order to keep their exemption. However, this will be extended to anyone who is working within the system. And so, how this does work is, because they are doing their 12-week practicum and we cannot pay them for that 12-week practicum, those are funds that we would have already had. So as long as . . . if it is someone who is employed in the system, the funding is there for us to give this loan.

And so at this point there is not anything that has been budgeted this year for this particular scheme for anyone who may not be working within the system. But we anticipate that it is something that we will be funding moving forward in case persons who want to come into the system start doing that who are not already employed by the system.

But at this particular juncture, it is open to anyone who is employed by the BPSS [Bermuda Public School System] at the moment who is seeking to get their 12-week practicum done, as I said, under the constraints of not being able to draw a salary during that time.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplementary or another question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. I just have one quick supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Minister, do you have a percentage or a number of teachers who fall under the exemption right now?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Currently I believe we have around 12. I have asked the Exemption Committee to forward me the complete list of who has been exempted over the last five years so we can reach out to them. But I believe at the moment it is about 12 exempted teachers in the system currently.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Further supplementary or new question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: That is it. I do not have any further questions for the Minister. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Jackson.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, MP Jackson.

The Speaker: The next question this morning is from MP Dunkley for the Minister of Transport.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question?

And I am going to be departing from here probably during this series of questions.

QUESTION 1: SATA AZORES AIRLINES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Honourable Minister of Transport for his Statement on SATA Azores Airlines and their flights to Bermuda. I am pleased to see this come to reality. It was part of the visit I had in May, I believe it was 2016, when we first talked about direct air links.

So question to the Honourable Minister: The Minister says in the first paragraph of his Statement, "This flight will be the first in a series of SATA charter flights until September 2021." Can the Minister please inform this Honourable House how many flights will we see in that period between June 13 and September 2021?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. It is a series of weekly charter flights. So you will see one flight every Sunday between [those dates].

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supplementary question to the Honourable Minister: Will the flight be direct from the Azores to Bermuda and direct back from Bermuda to the Azores?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: At risk of being pedantic, it will be "nonstop," not direct. So it is a nonstop flight between Bermuda and the Azores.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: So for those who are not that familiar with the airline industry, can the Minister

give some explanation? “Nonstop” means that it stops here in Bermuda and then continues somewhere else, and continues on its way?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: No. So “direct” means that the same aircraft goes on to another destination. So you can have a direct flight from Bermuda to the Azores with a stop in Boston. So that same flight, that same aircraft goes from Bermuda to Boston, Boston to the Azores. That is considered a “direct flight.”

A “nonstop flight” means that there are no stops for that aircraft between the two destinations. So it is a nonstop flight from Bermuda to the Azores. So when you take off from Bermuda, the next time you touch down will be in the Azores.

The Speaker: Thank you.

And, MP Dunkley, before you put your supplementary, I am going to turn the chair over to MP Swan.

MP Swan, you have the Chair.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Do you have your volume on? We see you, but we do not hear you, MP Swan. I am just testing your volume before I depart.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. We are good. We hear you now.

[Feedback]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Someone’s microphone is interfering.

[Feedback]

The Speaker: Hold on. Let me just try and get a little clarification here. The microphone, somebody’s microphone was breaking up. I am not sure if that microphone was the microphone that was MP Swan’s microphone or someone else’s microphone.

Some Hon. Members: I believe it was MP Swan’s microphone. Yes, I think it was MP Swan’s microphone.

[Pause]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Try taking off your earphones.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, MP Foggo. MP Foggo.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are a member of the Panel of Chairs. Are you in a position where you can have a better control with your volume than MP Swan?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. At this point in time, yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Could you take over? I will send you the list of persons who have indicated that they have questions that are remaining. Okay?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Okay.

The Speaker: I will send it to you on the chat.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes.

The Speaker: MP Swan, let MP Foggo take control of the Chair then. Okay?

MP Foggo, MP Dunkley is putting a second question to the Minister. And we can go from there. And I will send you in the chat the other questions. Okay?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Okay.

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Before Mr. Dunkley, MP, puts his second question, I have a supplementary on his first question, please.

The Acting Speaker: I am not sure who is speaking?

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is MP Pearman speaking.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: MP Dunkley put a question to the Honourable Minister of Tourism. And that question has been answered. I have a supplementary to that question before MP Dunkley moves on with his next question.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. So MP Dunkley, will you yield for the supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you, Madam. Honourable Minister, you were asked by MP Dunkley about the number of planes between June

and September, and then that devolved into a discussion about nonstop and direct flights. So just for the benefit of the listening public, who may not understand and appreciate the nuances of aircraft as you do, this plane will go between Bermuda and the Azores, and it will stop in Boston. Is that correct?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: No, that is incorrect. The aircraft will take off from Ponta Delgada and arrive here in Bermuda, nonstop. Passengers will disembark. New passengers will get on. They will take off out of Bermuda, and their next stop is the Azores, Ponta Delgada.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So that is a nonstop flight, in effect?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Correct. It is nonstop.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am sorry. Your Statement had said it is a direct route. But that is your answer, is it?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. I just wanted to make sure that this was clear.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful. I am grateful for the answer.

Madam Acting Speaker, I have a second supplementary. Thank you.

MP Dunkley had asked you about the number of flights between now and September 2021. And I am not sure we actually got the answer to that question. But how many flights does the Honourable Minister anticipate? How many planes between now and September 2021?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: One every week, which my quick math would say 16 flights.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful to the Honourable Minister for his response.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: MP Dunkley, your question.

QUESTION 2: SATA AZORES AIRLINES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Madam Acting Speaker, yes. My question to the Honourable Minister: What type of plane will be used on this weekly Sunday service?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: It will be an Airbus 321 100 or an Airbus 321 200.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I am finished on this set.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I am still awaiting the list of persons from the Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a question, Madam Acting Speaker, to the Minister of Works.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. I am just checking first if there are any other persons who put forth questions for the Minister of Transport.

There being none, we shall move to the Minister of Works.

Opposition Leader, please put your question forward.

QUESTION 1: RESCINDING OF THE APPROVAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF SANDYS 360

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

I, like the Minister, would like to declare my interest as a former student of Sandys Secondary School as well.

My question to the Minister is, How much have the successive Governments invested in Sandys 360 from the beginning of the project?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Madam Acting Speaker, I have no clue. I do not have that information before me, but I can undertake to get it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Colonel.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a supplementary.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. All right.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Madam Acting Speaker, based on my understanding and my research, it appears that \$5.3 million have been invested in the project. Can the Minister provide details on how he intends to protect Government's interest, given the amounts invested in the project?

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: All right. I have no knowledge of the five-point-whatever million dollars the Opposition Leader mentions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Five-point-three.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The building is not owned by us. I expect that there will be some discussions going forward based on this decision. And so we will protect the Government's interest as best we can.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Should you find that \$5.3 million—

The Acting Speaker: A supplemental question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The second, the second.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: RESCINDING OF THE APPROVAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF SANDYS 360

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Should you find that approximately \$5 million has been committed and invested in Sandys 360, will you plan to recover some of these funds, given that the contract was rescinded? Or are we going to write off the investments made to date?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I think that decision has already been made. The state of the building is in full disrepair and will require significant amounts of additional funding to bring it back into service or to demolish it. That is a matter for the trustees. And we will stand ready to have any discussions that may come forward, but we are not going to continue to have a million dollars hanging out there that nobody seems willing to accept.

Three years ago, we were at the stage where we had actually written a cheque to the law firm and were told to stop. [INAUDIBLE] this for three years. And we have come to this conclusion based on the economic circumstances that prevail today.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I accept that, Mr. Minister. And so all I can say is at this point—

The Acting Speaker: Is this another . . . we do not have three supplemental questions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Just a comment, just a comment.

The Acting Speaker: Right.

QUESTION 3: RESCINDING OF THE APPROVAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF SANDYS 360

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So in essence, we are going to write off \$5.3 [million] invested to date by the various governments.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am not prepared to say that. I am saying that it appears likely. And the fat lady has not sung on this story yet. We have taken another of step in this journey, but that does not mean that we are not still at the table.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Was that your third question? That was your third question.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am finished; thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Are there any other Members who put questions forward to the Minister of Public Works?

There being no other Members, are there any Members who put forward questions for other Ministers? I still do not have the list of names.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I would like to put questions to the Minister of National Security in regard to the TOOB Report Ministerial Statement.

The Acting Speaker: Did you indicate you had questions with the Speaker?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: That is correct. Yes, I did.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Member Dunkley, you may put your question forward to the Minister of National Security.

QUESTION 1: TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS BOARD (TOOB) REPORT 2020

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you.

Minister of National Security, thank you for the two Statements today.

In regard to the Treatment of Offenders Board Annual Report, you state in the Statement, I believe it is on page 2 where you state that you “turn to the board’s observations of the infrastructure of the facilities. The board notes that all of the facilities require maintenance primarily due to the age of the buildings.”

So in regard to the fact that \$400,000 was budgeted in the last financial year for prison works and \$400,000 was spent, none has been budgeted this year. Can you tell us how the \$400,000 was spent for minor prison works last year?

Hon. Renee Ming: Member Dunkley, with reference to the budget item, I would have to revert to you with that answer. But if you are speaking just on the whole in regard to infrastructure, this has been a concern. I think you raised it even during the budget period. But for me to provide you with the details of that, I would have to revert and come back to you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: And certainly also the second supplementary—

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I would appreciate your getting back to me because you would not have the information. But a supplementary, or the second supplementary was that there is \$800,000 put towards the budget for prison refurbishment. There was \$800,000 put last year and was not spent. Could the Honourable Minister answer or revert on how the \$800,000 will be spent this year? Obviously, between those two sums that adds up to \$1.2 million. That is a relatively small amount when you look at the size and the scope of the prison facilities. So I would like some feedback on what the intention is and how it would be spent.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. I can give you an update that we recognise that the prisons have challenges when it comes to infrastructure. And I think I have [previously] provided that in 2014 the prison would have been 20 years old, and it should have actually had an assessment on infrastructure. And that did not happen at the time. And so what we are doing now is we are working closely with the Ministry of Works, and we have a punch list of items that we know that we are trying to work through.

One of the things I think was mentioned in the Statement is the fact that we have commenced replacing all of the doors at the facility. And so the doors have been . . . I believe they have been purchased, but they have not arrived on Island yet. So that will be one area of infrastructure improvement that you will see at the facility for this year. And we hope to be able to provide more detail on that when the doors arrive because I believe there are 40 doors. And it will be a major infrastructure improvement for the facility.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Madam Acting Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS BOARD (TOOB) REPORT 2020

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: In light of the scope or the size of the facility, and the Minister has said there will be 40 doors, is the \$800,000 solely to replace the doors? Or are there other capital works that are being planned?

The Acting Speaker: Is this a second question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, a supplementary.

The Acting Speaker: I thought you already gave two supplemental questions.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No, I thought just one. But it can be a second question if you wish.

The Acting Speaker: Second question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. The answer to that question would be, if there is additional funding left, Member, we will use it to do whatever capital improvement and infrastructure improvement we can, that we can do.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay. I look forward to further updates from the Minister on that.

Another question, Acting Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Third question. Give your third question.

QUESTION 3: TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS BOARD (TOOB) REPORT 2020

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: On page 2 again, the Minister refers to the adjudications. And the Minister refers to a 5 per cent increase in mobile phone related adjudications from 2019 and also, alarmingly, a 13 per cent increase of adjudications involving assaults on inmates or corrections officers. Can the Honourable Minister please give us a summary of what is being done in these two areas to stop the alarming increase in the use of mobile phones and also in inmates' assaults on officers?

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Madam Acting Speaker, what we have seen, Member, is that COVID-19 has presented challenges not just for us who are even not incarcerated at this time, but even for the inmates. And there has been a lot of tension during this period. So the Treatment of Offenders Board, what they have been trying to do is to get in and to mitigate that tension and to provide, or where they can, provide solutions. And in addition to that, the Acting Commissioner has recently formulated a committee of inmates to be able to address the inmates' concerns more directly and hopefully more efficiently.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I do take the Minister's explanation.

The last sentence of the paragraph in the middle of page 2 gives a clear understanding, and I quote: "The board attributes much of these offences to increased tensions, coupled with the added restrictions of COVID-19." So can the Honourable Minister please provide a summary of what she believes

has increased tensions in the prisons, outside of COVID-19?

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: You currently have a population that is very young and have in some cases life sentences. And so there is some tension there. It could be also gang-related, Member. COVID-19 did not help us in terms of—there were some restrictions put in place in terms of family visits. And just being able to be—the visits became what they called “VV,” which was virtual visits. And so you were not actually physically—the family members and friends and support were not actually able to come into the prison for many months. And part of that is because (I am sure you can understand) the correctional facilities are very vulnerable. And so there are lots of precautions taken to ensure that inmates and officers are safe during the pandemic.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: My final supplementary, Madam Acting Speaker. My final supplementary.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely.

The Acting Speaker: That was your first supplementary? I thought that was your second.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: That was my third question. Yes. Supplementary to the Minister, final supplementary.

Minister, do you believe that the long-term position of an acting commissioner, where there is no set leadership in place, has contributed to any of the challenges that we face in Corrections at the present time?

Hon. Renee Ming: You asked me *do I believe the challenges facing Corrections . . .* So I am asking, do you have any more detail on what you believe these [challenges] to be?

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, can you make your question more specific so the Minister can answer you? I think that is what her concern is.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay. Let me rephrase it this way: Does the Honourable Minister believe that an acting commissioner is having an impact on some of the challenges within Corrections? We have had an acting commissioner for a number of years.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: I do not believe that it is having any effect, though it sounds like what you are hinting at in that question would be *negative effect*. But I would like to see the role become formalised.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members with questions or supplementary questions for the Minister?

There being no other Members—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Acting Speaker, I do not have a supplemental; I have questions that I sent to you in the chat.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Fine.

Mr. Scott Pearman: [This is] MP Pearman.

The Acting Speaker: MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Were these questions also sent to the Speaker?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No. I sent them directly to your chat.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, fine. Go ahead and ask your question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, my questions are on your Parole Board Report 2020 Statement. The first question is on the second page of that Statement where you talk about the 43 inmates who chose to decline parole.

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

QUESTION 1: THE PAROLE BOARD REPORT 2020

Mr. Scott Pearman: My first question is this: In this next paragraph below, you mentioned that the purpose of parole, and you say, “Parole provides inmates with an opportunity for a supported re-entry into society. With tools to assist in transition back into the community, former inmates are less likely to reoffend.” We are seeking as a Government and an Island to encourage parole. Is that right?

Hon. Renee Ming: I am sorry. Which page did you refer to, Member?

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is your Parole Board Report Statement. It is the second page in the third para-

graph down. And you are talking about what parole provides to the inmates, in the third paragraph.

Hon. Renee Ming: Okay. Yes, and what was your question?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So you are talking about parole as an opportunity to re-enter the society in a supported way with tools to assist.

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And you say former inmates are less likely to reoffend if they are on parole. And I am just wondering. It is the Government's and the society's intention here to encourage parole; is that right? Parole is a positive mechanism to allow re-entry with support?

Hon. Renee Ming: Parole is a positive mechanism; you are correct. But it is not on us to encourage and inmates can make a decision that they would like to do their entire time as prescribed. So is it something that we encourage? I can say that it would be the fact that it comes with some level of support. There are some inmates who feel that that is something that they need. So it would still be their position to choose that.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I see. Supplementary, Madam Acting Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you may.

Mr. Scott Pearman: First supplementary. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: So where, Honourable Minister, you say above in that Statement that 43 inmates have chosen to decline parole, to stay incarcerated because they would prefer an early release date. Should that be a matter of concern that they would rather wait and come out without the parole mechanism? Or is that not a matter of concern; it is merely a matter of their personal choice?

Hon. Renee Ming: Well, first of all, in that instance right there, there are some inmates who would prefer not to have to conform to the reporting and the reviews that would happen after parole. And [in] some cases, they are up for parole which could be very close to their release date. So that again would be their decision to decline parole.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary, Acting Chair?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you may. That is your second.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, to the answer you just gave, I mean, is that a concern that someone is effectively choosing to get outside of the parole mechanism when they have an early release date? Is that an issue of concern?

Hon. Renee Ming: I do not know that I would say that it is an issue of concern, MP [Pearman], because that would also allow us to have to either profile or decide that a person who may not want to have any rules or assessments around them is likely to reoffend. And that I would not have enough information on to give that answer to you today.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Acting Speaker, if I may move my second question?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, you may.

QUESTION 2: THE PAROLE BOARD REPORT 2020

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, my second question is still on the same Statement, on the Parole Board Report, but it is on the next page on the top. And you are talking about parole again here, and you are talking about the two elementary requirements for parole being appropriate employment and educational pursuits.

Can you just tell the Honourable House, even in a very short way, how that works? Is it a necessity? Do they have to identify these for parole to be given? Or can parole be given in the hope that those will be achieved?

Hon. Renee Ming: It is a necessity for parole to be granted.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Supplementary, Acting Speaker.

[Pause]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Acting Speaker, you are on mute.

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead, Member.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Supplementary.
Honourable Minister, you identify then that there are seven foreign nationals who are incarcer-

ated. And I am wondering what happens to them on their release back into society? If they are foreign nationals, would they then be deported from Bermuda or would they remain in Bermuda? How does that work?

Hon. Renee Ming: I think that at the time, depending on what the situation is around their release, they may well be deported. But that again, MP Pearman, would be on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful. Are any of the seven foreign nationals whom you have identified in your Statement likely to be released in the immediate future or the near future?

Hon. Renee Ming: I cannot confirm that information.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister, and thank you, Acting Speaker.

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: On my chat I saw no other questions being advanced. I will go double-check to make certain that that is still the case. And I believe it is the case. And if there is no one with a supplemental and no further questions, that ends the Question Period. It is now 11:25.

That moves us on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Acting Speaker: So, Members, are there any Members wishing to give congratulations and/or obituary comments?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker, I do.

The Acting Speaker: Is that MP Dennis Lister, III?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, it is. Can you still hear me?

The Acting Speaker: Okay. You have three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would just like to start off first by sending condolences to the family of Mr. Gregory Young of Warwickshire Drive, a constituent of mine.

Also I would like to send condolences to the family of the young Ms. Amber Bridges, who passed on [NO AUDIO].

Also, Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family of a former teacher of mine who passed recently, Ms. Lois Lightbourne. She

was my first-grade teacher in primary school at Bermuda Institute [NO AUDIO].

An Hon. Member: Can I also be associated, ma'am?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Also, Madam Acting Speaker, also very sadly was recently I have had two young people my age who passed whom I felt very dearly [about], Mr. Judah Quallo from Somerset, a friend of mine who passed recently; and also Ms. Renee Bean, also a friend of mine who passed. So I would like to send condolences to the families of those persons.

And on a much lighter note, Madam Acting Speaker, he has left the building, but I would like to send early birthday congratulations to Mr. Speaker. His birthday is on Sunday. So I hope he is listening. But if not, when he comes back we will definitely have those [NO AUDIO]. Those are my [comments] this morning.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Are there any other Members?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. MP Tyrrell, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good morning, all.

Madam Acting Speaker, since the last time we met, two members of my constituency celebrated birthdays. And because I think it is better to give roses while people are still alive, I would ask that the House send congratulations to, in the first instance, Dorothy Lattimore of Whale View Lane, who turned 92 and is still in good stead. And the second one is Ms. Venetta Simmons, who turned 91, who lives on Olive Bank Drive. And I wish them both all the best.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any other Members with congratulations or obituary comments?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard to Amber Bridges. You all know that she was a fellow equestrian, a young one at that. The young person had a passion for equestrian sports. And she was about to make her career in that field. She was a lovely, charming person, kind heart.

And my condolences go out to her mother Heidi, and her father, Mr. Bridges and the rest of her family. It is a sad loss to the community.

I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard to the Speaker on his upcoming birthday.

And I would like to send condolences out to the family of Ms. Iris Talbot, who was the Education Minister's grandmother. She was a Devil's Hole person. As you all know, my family is from Devil's Hole as well. And so I would like to convey my thoughts and prayers to the family of the Minister of Education and his mother, Marva, whom I have known for many, many years.

The Acting Speaker: I would like to be associated with those remarks.

Any other Member offering obits or congrats?

MP Famous, I see you. Are you trying to chime in?

[No audible response]

The Acting Speaker: Any other Members?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, go. You have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good morning. Good morning to colleagues, and good morning to the people of Bermuda.

I firstly want to give condolences to my mother and her family on the loss of her brother, Moleto Turnbull of the Virgin Islands who passed away yesterday morning. He was a master mason. He built houses all across the Virgin Islands, father of five, grandfather of many. And he will be a loss to our family.

I also want to give congrats to the Nurse of the Year. I was specifically told to make sure to give congrats to the Nurse of the Year, Ms. Simmons (let me pronounce her name properly), a lady. She works at MAWI [Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute], so technically she works—she is a representative of my constituency. But her name is Karen Grant-Simmons. She is the wife of Mr. Pop Simmons of White Hall and Somerset. So congratulations to her and all of her colleagues for all of the work that they do keeping us both of sound mind and sound body.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Are there any other Members?

Some Hon. Members: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you.

Colleagues, I would also like to be associated with the congratulations to Nurse of the Year, Nurse Simmons. Obviously, it is fantastic to recognise people in our health care industry. And I think over the past year, through COVID-19, many Bermudians and residents have come to appreciate just how much work everyone does in this industry. So congratulations to Nurse Simmons, Nurse of the Year. And thank you to all of those in nursing who do such a laudable job for us.

On a sadder note, I would like to be associated with the condolences to the Bridges family on the passing of their young daughter just recently. Any road accident that incurs a fatality is certainly a life-altering moment in time for people. That never changes as they go through. And for somebody so young to be lost with so much hope and opportunity in the future, it certainly sends a gut-wrenching probe all through your body. And I think it is wonderful to see our community help rally with the Bridges to bring them some comfort during this very, very difficult period of grieving.

I would like to be associated—I cannot recall if the Member who spoke before me from constituency 11 did recognise it, but I would like to give condolences to the family of K. C. Daniels on the passing of his wife, Louise Daniels, who died just recently. If the Honourable Member did not bring it up, I would like him to be associated with it. She lived in his constituency, and I have known the family for a long period of time. So my thoughts and prayers of comfort go out to the Daniels family with the passing of a wonderful lady.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: You are welcome.

I believe I saw Honourable Member Vance Campbell.

Vance Campbell, do you have comments you wish to make? It is 11:33. You have three minutes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, I do. Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker.

I would like to associate myself with the condolences issued by MP Famous and also the condolences issued by MP Dunkley to the family of the late Louise Virginia Daniels. She actually lived in my constituency. But she was a great lady of Devonshire. And again, I would like condolences to go out to her husband, Mr. Kenneth C. "Sundown" Daniels; her children, Kyle, Rhonda, Roxann. As I said, she was in her 93rd year. And it is always sad when we lose someone. But in this instance, we can be satisfied that she lived a great life and had a great influence on many, many in the Devonshire and Smith's area. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members with congrats or obits to air your comments?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. I would like to associate myself with the comments from MP Campbell on Louise Daniels, as Sundown is a brother of mine. Louise Daniels and my grandmother were very good friends. And—

The Acting Speaker: Can I just pause you for one second?

Somebody has a radio or a TV on in the background. Please mute the microphone. Thank you. Sorry, Minister. You may continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you.

Ms. Louise Daniels and my grandmother were very good friends. And I know Ms. Daniels through my affiliation with St. Philip AME Church, that little church on the sound down there in Devil's Hole. It is a very close-knit community. And so the community is feeling both the loss of my grandmother in her 93rd year, as well as Ms. Daniels in her 93rd year. So I would like to associate myself with MP Campbell's condolences.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

I would like to associate myself with the remarks for Ms. Louise Smith-Daniels. Ms. Smith-Daniels is from Frog Alley, Somersall Road, a sister of Carlton Smith, a former candidate for the Progressive Labour Party. She was a wonderful, very, very kind lady. And she will certainly be sorely missed by her family.

Also, I would like to be associated with the remarks concerning the loss of "Pat" Iris Talbot. Ms. Talbot, a stalwart of Harris Bay, a stalwart of Cleveland County Cricket Club (formerly Tucker's Town County Cricket Club) and the County Cup champions, the most exciting County Cup champions, I should say, at Harris Bay. Her son, Avon Talbot [deceased] was at one time a captain of the Cleveland County Cricket Club.

You know, Madam Acting Speaker, as a child I can remember all of the people who treated me kind. Ms. Talbot was one of them. She was always kind and loving to everybody. I have never seen her be any other way. Ms. Talbot was certainly a favourite of mine. I loved her. And I know her children, Marva, Debra, Tyler [son-in-law, husband of Uyone], Kathie-

Ann will certainly miss her, and the entire family. She was certainly a loving, loving and kind person.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Are there any other Members wishing to give condolences or congratulatory remarks?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker. MP Pearman.

The Acting Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

I would just like to remark on the passing as reported—

The Acting Speaker: MP Pearman, can you turn on your camera, please? For some reason I cannot see you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Of course. Of course, Madam Acting Speaker. Can you see me now?

The Acting Speaker: Now I can, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I can see me on the screen; hopefully you can see me, Madam Acting Speaker.

I would just like to take this opportunity to observe the passing as was reported in the paper this week of the Supreme Court Manager of many, many years, Joann Lynch, who has sadly left us. Ms. Acting Speaker, tributes have been paid already to Ms. Lynch by the judiciary. I would like to draw the House's attention to comments made by Judge Charles Etta-Simmons. She observed that Ms. Lynch had worked for the court for more than 40 years, which was the vast majority of her lifetime. And to quote, that she "had offered an ear to listen, a shoulder to cry on and was a source of valuable advice." I would echo that sentiment by the Learned Judge.

The Learned Judge went on to say, "I can tell you that she suffered fools gladly—and those were just the lawyers." How right she was! The way in which our court system works is often difficult to members of the public, and it can even be difficult for the lawyers. And when you have someone such as Ms. Lynch who has so much knowledge of the system and is so helpful to those using it, it really is a great benefit to society and to the community.

The Learned Judge, Ms. Etta-Simmons, said about Ms. Lynch that, "Her door was always open and she had a chair in her office that everyone from the then Chief Justice to the cleaner made use of." And that is true. She treated one as well and as helpfully as she could for many echelons of society, whether it was a judge or a cleaner. The Judge observed that

Ms. Lynch was an invaluable asset to the Supreme Court Registry for decades. Again, how true.

Ms. Acting Speaker, our Director of Public Prosecutions, Cindy Clarke, recognised that Ms. Lynch was like a mother to many young lawyers. And I can agree with that. I know a young associate who would not have survived her time at our law firm had it not been for the helpful wisdom and guidance of Ms. Lynch. Ms. Clarke referred to Ms. Lynch as “a fairy godmother” for the lawyers. And again, how true. She said this: “Whether it was for a copy of an obscure ruling in a trial or whether it was to meet us at the back door so that we could file a document after the registry had closed, you knew you could count on Ms Lynch to help.” And that is true. She helped out-of-hours anytime she could. Whoever needed help, she was there.

The President of the Bermuda Bar Counsel, Ms. Liz [Elizabeth] Christopher, acknowledged that she was among the many who benefited from Ms. Lynch’s kindness. And she said this: Ms. Lynch was the person who “carried me throughout my career.” And that was how Ms. Lynch was. She was someone who would help to carry others.

Judge Carlisle Greaves described Ms. Lynch as a treasured resource and said of her, “She had the best memory of anyone I had ever known.” And our former Chief Justice, Ian Kawaley, remarked of Ms. Lynch that she was a role model for her staff and the person everyone went to for help and advice.

The Acting Speaker: Member, can you round up your comments?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

Ms. Acting Speaker, to those judicial tributes let me add my own very brief remarks. She had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the court and court procedure. She walked an extra mile to help court users, lawyers and members of the public. Sixty-eight years old seems so very young today. And she was an unsung hero, to whom we all owe a great debt of thanks.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: You are welcome, Member.
Any other Members wishing to speak?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Minister Furbert, is that you?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker. How are you?

The Acting Speaker: Very fine. Good morning.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, and good morning, colleagues.

Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to also be associated with the condolences for Ms. Talbot of Harris Bay, sending condolences to the family and our very own Minister, Diallo Rabain, as well as condolences to the family of young Amber Bridges those to young Amber Bridges. I just have to mention it because any parent of a 16-year-old or any parent of a child would feel heartfelt condolences to that family. So I just wanted to associate myself with those condolences. I am sure the whole House would feel the same way.

And I would also like to give congratulatory remarks to a constituent of mine, McKenzie-Kohl Tuckett, who has graduated from Warwick Academy. And I have to mention McKenzie. Many may have heard of McKenzie through the media. She is just a very active young lady in our community. And she was the Head Girl of Warwick Academy, the youth assistant director of Future Leaders Bermuda. She was the Youth Premier under our very own Youth Parliament. And I could list a number of achievements and awards that McKenzie has earned throughout her school career. She has much more to go, as she will be attending (I believe it is) Bristol in the UK, studying law.

And I know that there are many great young people who have graduated and have done many great things. But I did want to give congratulations to McKenzie and her family for her most recent graduation.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: You are welcome, Member.

Any other Members with congrats or obituary remarks?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Acting Speaker: Good morning, Member Swan. I must tell you that your microphone is still quite muffled. But you can give it a try.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I can hear you, but it is still muffled.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Acting Speaker: It is just a little better. I do not see you any longer.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Okay. Okay, Member Swan. We hear you, but it is still very much muffled. Is that it?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Any other Member?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: MP Jackson, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

I just want to take a moment to congratulate all of the runners in the recent 24th of May, or Bermuda Day, holiday. It was a wonderful show. It was so impressive that the organisers of the race were able to adhere to the strict restrictions that were still in place. The runners came out, and the feeling and the atmosphere were absolutely amazing. I certainly spent a good bit of my time on Cedar Avenue. All of the spectators were happy, they were safe, and the runners were in good form. And I just want to just congratulate everyone, because everyone is a winner for the Bermuda Day race. I am glad it happened. I am looking forward to future events throughout the summer and that we are able to get back into a routine of feeling that goodwill and camaraderie amongst our community.

And so again, congratulations to all of the runners and the organisers of the Bermuda Day race. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members wishing to speak? Any other Members wishing to speak?

Before I hand the floor back over to the Deputy Speaker, I wish to weigh in on the congrats and/or obituary remarks. I would like to be associated with the condolences for Ms. Talbot, who I can say, regardless of her age she was an extremely close friend of mine. Whenever she came down to St. George's, which was often, we would either have breakfast or lunch together. And she was just a pleasant lady, full of fun, full of life. And I know her family is going to miss her dearly. And condolences to the Talbot family and to Minister Rabain on the loss of his grandmother.

I would also like to send condolences out to the Astwood/King family on the loss of their mother, Ms. Nellie Astwood, who is the last living member of her family from her generation. She leaves behind her children to mourn, Voorhees Astwood, Stacey, Kim—

An Hon. Member: May I be associated with that, please?

The Acting Speaker: I would like to associate the Deputy Leader.

She was the matriarch in that family—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And the Opposition Leader.

The Acting Speaker: The Opposition Leader. I would like to associate the Opposition Leader with those remarks.

Last but not least, I would like to offer congratulatory remarks for Mr. Calvin Smith, who in 2016 retired from the police service only to be called back in immediately. He is retiring again. He will be a great loss. His career as a police officer was nothing short of stellar. He got numerous commendations while serving. While serving as a police officer, he reached the level of Chief Inspector. I think he—

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: May I be associated, Madam Acting Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: I would like to associate Member Weeks with these remarks.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Myself, MP Richardson, Jarion Richardson.

The Acting Speaker: And Jarion Richardson.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: And Tyrrell, Tyrrell.

[Laughter]

The Acting Speaker: MP Tyrrell.

I am going to associate the House because his career was so outstanding that I think it deserves association from the House itself.

He served in various capacities. He received 15 Commissioner's commendations, Long Service Awards, numerous letters of good works, sports citations—you name it, he did it. I would also like to mention the fact that while a police officer he also volunteered to serve in the band in the Regiment. And having done so, it has brought his number of years of service in the public service to 42 years. And that is nothing to laugh about. He has made himself available as a public servant.

And I have no doubt that as he moves forward in his retirement years, because he is one who has given so much, he will not know how to stop giving. And I have no doubt that he will continue to volunteer his services in some capacity that is going to assist people and assist our community in some way.

I do want to point out one thing. He was mentioned in the Queen's Birthday Honours list because of his service. And so I think because of that commendation, it deserves special mention.

On that note, because I have probably reached my three-minute mark (I can tell), I thank you, Members, for allowing me to share.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, did you wish to resume the floor? Mr. Deputy Speaker? No? Okay. I will continue.

This ends obits and congrats. And so we now move on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Acting Speaker: There being none, we move on.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Acting Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Acting Speaker: None.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Acting Speaker: There are three Government Bills.

Ministers, we are on Introduction of Bills.

FIRST READINGS

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Madam Acting Speaker, I am introducing the following Bills for their first readings so that they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting. First is the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021; and the Economic Substance Amendment Act of 2021.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister Dickinson.

We should have one more introduction of a Bill by Minister Wilson.

FIRST READING

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

I am 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 Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Health.

I believe that covers Introduction of Bills.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Acting Speaker: It is my understanding that the Motions that we will be hearing today, the order has been changed. And so I think we will be hearing the Motion that is going to be led by Minister Roban. Minister, is that correct?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. Yes. We wish [the indulgence of] the House with the change in the order, that I may do my Motion first before the Honourable Finance Minister.

The Acting Speaker: Right. Just pause there for a second, Minister.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, I am back if you would like for me to take over.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Yes.

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

The Speaker: Good. I thank you for chairing during that period.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes.

The Speaker: Members, I was able to hear some of it. I want to acknowledge that MP Foggo, having stepped in at the last minute as a pinch-hitter, did an extremely good job.

Thank you for that, MP.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, I walked in as you were explaining that you wish to do your matter ahead of the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.

The Speaker: And yes, that was acknowledged to my office beforehand, and I had agreed that we would do it. However, we still have to put it to the House floor for the indulgence of the House.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Yes, sir.

The Speaker: And I would like at this moment just to seek the indulgence of the House as to whether we can proceed by allowing the Deputy Premier to move his motion before we move the motion of the Minister of Finance.

Are there any objections to that?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Speaker: No objections? Good.

Deputy Premier, you can move your motion as the first Order of Business for today.

MOTION

BERMUDA PLAN 2018

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Members of the House for their indulgence.

I do wish to now move that the House do now take under consideration the following motion, notice of which was given on the 21st of May 2021:

¹THAT this Honourable House supports the Bermuda Plan 2018.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

Continue, Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that in accordance with sections 10 and 11 of the Development and Planning Act 1974, that this Honourable House consider and approve the Bermuda Plan 2018.

The Bermuda Plan 2018 (the Plan) is a development plan prepared by the Department of Planning to guide development for the Island for many years to come. The Plan, which covers the entire Island with the exception of the City of Hamilton, comprises a policy document and zoning maps, and the tribunal report, and can be accessed online directly from the department's website, www.planning.gov.bm.

Mr. Speaker, the overarching aim of this Plan is to effectively manage Bermuda's natural and built environment, resources and development, and to help build healthy, sustainable communities. In support of this aim, Mr. Speaker, the Plan is based on three strategies: a development strategy, a conservation strategy and a community strategy. Mr. Speaker, within the framework of these strategies, the Plan sets out five key goals:

1. to conserve open space and protect the Island's natural and built heritage;
2. to provide sufficient development potential to meet the community's needs;
3. to facilitate community improvements in neighbourhoods to create better, healthier and safer places to live and visit;
4. to encourage a more efficient and sustainable use and development of land and buildings; and
5. to ensure a high quality of design and accessibility in all new developments.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may recall that the Bermuda Plan 2018 was first released as a

draft plan and was subject to a three-and-a-half-month public consultation, which resulted in a total of 457 objections and counter-objections being received. Mr. Speaker, following the withdrawal of 50 objections, 232 objections remained, 147 (or 63 per cent) of which were zone-related. The most common zoning objection involved landowners wanting to remove agriculture reserve and woodland reserve conservation areas from their properties. This has been a common theme with objections to previous draft Bermuda Plans and reflects landowners wanting greater development potential for their properties.

Mr. Speaker, in the department's processing of the 232 valid objections, I am pleased to note that 52 per cent of them were resolved between the Department of Planning, technical officers and the objector. This left a remaining 48 per cent of objections in an unresolved status to be heard by the tribunal. Mr. Speaker, following the conclusion of the tribunal inquiries, in December 2020 recommendations were made and submitted to myself in the form of the draft Bermuda Plan 2018 Tribunal Report.

Following the completion of my review, this report was finalised to reflect the resolutions for each objection and representation. Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Plan 2018 planning statement and digital zoning maps reflect the final resolutions for amendments to the draft Bermuda Plan 2018. As a result of these amendments, the final Bermuda Plan 2018 reflects a rezoning of some 25 acres of conservation-zoned land to development-zoned land from the draft Plan.

Mr. Speaker, the most significant zoning changes involve such areas as the St. Regis property in St. George's where some 20 acres of land were rezoned to tourism to align with the development approvals granted by the St. George's Resort Act 2018. This land under the Bermuda draft Plan 2018 was zoned a combination of both conservation zoning as well as development zoning.

Other significant zoning amendments included the Morgan's Point property, which resulted in an expansion of the special study area zoning to align with property boundaries, as well as a loss of coastal reserve conservation zoning, and the BLDC land at Southside, which included the rezoning of just over 20 acres of industrial-zoned land to mixed-use.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Sorry. Mr. Speaker, hello?

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister. Sorry. Someone just came into the office briefly.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was not sure if you asked me to pause. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Just continue.

¹ See [amendment to Motion](#) at page 1515

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, the tribunal provided additional remarks for my consideration. Of particular note, the tribunal recommended that a new coastal study for Bermuda should be undertaken. It was specifically noted that there is continuing development pressure upon coastal areas. As such, the impacts of climate change upon Bermuda's shores must be comprehensively assessed to determine the continued viability to develop along the coastline.

Mr. Speaker, the tribunal recommendation to conduct a new coastal study for Bermuda is wholly supported. Such a study would be in alignment with the Government's commitment to the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme (known as BOPP) and preparation for a marine spatial plan, in addition to highlight the risks from climate change in order to assist this Government to determine the solutions to mitigate the risks.

Mr. Speaker, it is appreciated that a balance must be struck between securing coastline whilst enabling development to continue in a pragmatic way. Commissioning a coastal study will provide an updated coastal vulnerability assessment for the Island and a detailed review of the coastal reserve conservation zone, which would enable the updating of coastal protection and development policies.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of the Bermuda Plan 2018 cannot be understated. There is a recognised need to provide flexibility within policy to provide the necessary mechanisms to support development and new investment. This, of course, should not be to the detriment of our natural environment. I am going to state that actual sentence again, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is important for people to understand. We are trying to find a balance here. *This, of course, should not be to the detriment of our natural environment.* The work of the department involves assessing these competing interests. And it is becoming increasingly challenging in today's rapidly changing environment.

Mr. Speaker, in this vein the department continues its work to streamline the planning process. Following the approval and adoption of the final Bermuda Plan 2018, plan-making efforts will focus on preparing local community plans for individual areas of the Island. It is recognised that although the Island is such a limited land mass, each community has a set of unique circumstances, and thereby requires more tailored policy to better serve the needs of the residents in their respective communities. One such example involves a local plan for North East Hamilton, details of which will be released very soon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to plan-making, the department is working diligently on other projects, including legislative change to ensure services and programmes are meeting the needs of our dynamic environment and society. Mr. Speaker, in efforts to adapt

to the increasing impact of climate change, the review of the Bermuda Building Code will incorporate more sustainable building practices, utilising the latest advances in renewable technology. Bermuda's code requirements and building methods are widely recognised for their resilience. And our aim is to continue and build upon this stellar reputation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity as I come to the conclusion of my introductory remarks at this time to recognise the efforts of Ms. Victoria Pereira, the Director of the Department of Planning, who is actually with me here today, and her team. And I believe Mr. [Larry] Williams, who is the Assistant Director of Planning, is also here, who is another part of the team. And there are others, Mr. Speaker, whom I will not take the time right now to mention, but I do recognise their contribution in their ongoing efforts to transform [the Planning Department's] service and to provide innovative ways of service seeing to the development needs of our Island.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, to [add to] my credit to the team at Planning, I would like to thank the members of the Land Tribunal, which includes Mr. John Payne, who is the Chair; Ms. Jennifer Haworth; and Mr. Carlos Amaral; and the alternate members, Mr. Jonathan Starling, Ms. Vanessa Turner and Ms. Quinell Francis, for their commitment and many hours of effort up to the conclusion of this Plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and that ends my introductory remarks to this debate.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, MP Richardson.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. I am just going to get my video started, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, we see you.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Perfect.

And I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the Honourable Minister for bringing this before the House, but most especially his offer of having the technical officers and leadership team of the Department of Planning brief us on the activities of the Bermuda Plan, the workup in the Bermuda Plan, and the processes and outcomes. It was an informative briefing, and we appreciate this always. Likewise, we extend our thanks to the leadership team of Victoria Pereira and Larry Williams, and the tribunal members.

Mr. Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, I have . . . the time allocation of 30 minutes? Seeking your guidance, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Yes. It is 30 minutes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Great. Thank you.

The Speaker: Actually, I am sorry. You are the first speaker from the Opposition, so you have 60 minutes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Both lead speakers from either side have 60 minutes, and all other speakers have 30 minutes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the clarification.

The Speaker: You are welcome.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I wanted to draw everyone's attention, the public's attention most especially, to the volume of work that has gone into this process, which was striking. As a new politician I am often overwhelmed by the quality of information that gets to the House of Assembly. And in this case that was absolutely not the case. The Plan itself [consists of] about some 231 pages and was obviously very well researched. There were some 69 pages on the review process itself and a 765-page report on the work of the tribunal. And that is not including the various research studies that took place as it relates to commercial/residential use and et cetera. So a very full-some project, and it should be noted as such.

This report is aiming to govern some 13,000-plus acres of land stock that we have in Bermuda. And it is a challenge to do so. What we are looking at in some of these reports is the use of our current land stock. Something like 47 per cent is currently used for residential, 33 per cent is used for parks, reserves and recreation. And surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps a little bit despondently, only 2 per cent is zoned for tourism. Now, we will go through that a little bit in the report in the details, and I am sure I stand to be guided by the technical officers. But this is part of my presentation, my contribution to the debate—alignment of our land use to our political and economic direction.

It is noteworthy that not all land is identical in Bermuda. Obviously, it is zoned differently. But most especially, a different number of people live everywhere on the Island. This came to fruition or is observed in the population density of the Island. In other words, more people live in Pembroke than any other parish by some 17 per cent. So obviously, we have to

govern our use of land in those places with a kind of deliberateness and care because what we are actually talking about when we say *land use* and we talk about the 13,000 acres of land stock, we are not talking about a very arbitrary or bureaucratic exercise, but rather the quality of life and impacts for individual people, for individual residents, as well as the success of our wider economy.

And it has sociological impacts, Mr. Speaker. Our infrastructure does generate the reality of how people go about their lives in Bermuda. And it has these impacts such as the extent to which our country is walkable. It impacts how much carbon we introduce into the environment because of our transportation. And that says how much oil we have to import or fuel we have to import, which goes towards our economy. So this is a very, very crucial piece of managing the affairs of the country and the society. So I do not want anyone to walk away thinking that this is a bureaucratic exercise.

One of the trends that came to mind in this discovery was how we are moving towards smaller households. And so we are going to see an increased need for higher-density residential in and around commercial centres. This obviously impacts the nature of the City or the Corporation of Hamilton, of St. George's and those areas, what those look like. I am very mindful, Mr. Speaker, having grown up on White Hill, that development was obviously, to most small boys, the furthest thing from my mind. But I am mindful in the near future that small boys will grow up in a different Bermuda. They will grow up in a place that, if governed, if managed in a way that is not sustainable, they will grow up in a concrete jungle. That is a kind of hard thing to do. So we have these incredible challenges facing us. And the department seems to be paying a lot of attention to that.

I note that, by the way, this report and this body of work utilised the 2016 and 2010 census results, and there was an extensive survey and feedback portion to this exercise. The project itself tends to resolve or navigate several substantial challenges. And these are not easily dealt with. There is competition for land use in Bermuda. And not unlike our circumstances with COVID-19, the interests of the individual have to be balanced with the interests of the group and the interests of differing groups, different opinions. Obviously, developers, although I do not think any developer is so maniacal as to bring about a concrete jungle in Bermuda. But nonetheless, there is land that people want to be rezoned from conservation into other purposes. And equally, we cannot make the whole Island one big nature reserve. So we have to balance those. And that is part of what this exercise is. It is trying to do that in the best way possible.

But one of the challenges it also has is it takes quite a long time for these exercises to take place. The 2018 Plan supersedes the 2008 plan. And it is lost to no one that it is [now] 2021. So these exercises

take quite a long time, and they govern a length of time as well, some 10 to 15 years of development in Bermuda. This is in and of itself challenging and problematic because Bermuda changes quite quickly. We are a small country with a relatively small population. So, relatively minor demographic changes have significant impacts. And development is a longer-view project.

So, when we start a project in this space, we can actually see changes which impact the rationale of actually undertaking that development before it is complete.

So it is one of the challenges that we face in managing our land resources. And obviously, we cannot satisfy everybody. Not only is the process going to be challenged in and of itself—and, Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the process a little bit. We do have objections that are raised by the public. They are opined on by the technical officers and decided by the tribunal, and then some are further sent to the Minister for consideration. And there are some challenges, there are some complaints from the public in that there is not an opportunity to rebut the director's opinion when it goes before the tribunal again. Again, we are mindful of those challenges. We are mindful of everything they have to deal with, and the cost and time of this exercise.

Also, there are—you cannot satisfy everyone. There are obviously people who will not be satisfied with the decisions of the tribunal or the decisions of the Minister. And so yet again we have a department which is trying to balance competing interests.

One of our largest challenges that we face that the Minister touched on, and I am thankful that we are going to attend to it, is climate change especially as it relates to coastal erosion and development. This is a big area for us, Mr. Speaker, because we are going to be significantly impacted by what is happening in climate change science. So Bermuda is an Island. It is extremely sensitive to the impacts [from climate] to the ocean and to our coast. And for us to proceed as if we will not see significant changes within our lifetime to our coasts would not be a mature way to approach this problem. So I am thankful that we are going to see an expansion from the 2018 Bermuda Plan into coastal erosion and coastal development.

Some of the great parts in this Bermuda Plan, Mr. Speaker, are a focus on or rather the introduction of a segment on Healthy Communities. Again, this plan is not a bureaucratic exercise. It has significant impact on the nature of our society, in the way people go about moving around the Island, the lifestyle of Bermudians. And I think that Healthy Communities is a key part of making sure that everyone on the Island is dealt with or rather is being—everyone on the Island is being treated accordingly in a top-down manner. In other words, that the infrastructure that we decide on, the development that we decide on has a

positive impact into our communities and the lifestyles of the individual.

There is going to be a review on the building code for sustainable designs, and that includes renewable energies, and we are thankful for that. The commitment of the Planning Department to increasing the walkability of Bermuda—and I want to touch on this, especially as it relates to our disabled community, Mr. Speaker—because as it stands right now the City of Hamilton is our most developed area and most accessible to our disabled community. But as soon as you get out into the parishes, we do face some significant challenges in the absence of sidewalks. Even though we have a lot of verges alongside our highways, those are not usable by the disabled in any kind of safe manner. So it is something we have to attend to. And again, as I spoke to earlier, if we increase our walkability of the entire Island, this means that we are going to see a change in transport.

Most importantly and what I want to speak to is our traffic situation and our highway situation, Mr. Speaker. I will touch on that after I just make this one note about the tourism development. We did see a partial rezoning of Harmony Club and beach in Tucker's Point and a complete rezoning of properties such as Sandsong, The Breakers, Sea Cliffs, The Wharf, Harbour Gardens, Loughlands, White Sands, Salt Kettle, Palmetto Gardens, Somerset Bridge guesthouse.

Tourism. I think this speaks to the problem with our tourism product, to the problem we have with our tourism industry altogether. We are seeing less land being used for that purpose. And that cannot bode well. That must be an indicator of some sort. And although that is not the subject of this debate, Mr. Speaker, it is noteworthy that there are indications of our issues even when it comes down to something as almost not connected as development of Bermuda and obviously preservation of our space, of our land mass.

I would like to raise, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister's comments, the question about our traffic situation. Mr. Speaker, we are all well aware that even just this last week, sadly, our roads have gone from being relatively benign within living memory to being something of . . . it is almost indescribable out there, Mr. Speaker. When I ride to work on my scooter, it is just shocking what I see. And one of the things I learned when I was a police officer . . . we attended a conference on problem-oriented policing. And we looked at the use of infrastructure to resolve law enforcement matters. Although I do not think that traffic in Bermuda is a strictly law enforcement matter, nonetheless infrastructure can play a very, very key role in changing behaviours of people.

This Plan as it stands relates to the development on a going-forward basis. And it does not seem to address—and maybe the Minister can clarify—retroactivity. So if a person were to start a new development, then it is constrained by the Plan. But if a

property were to lay in its current state, then the guides, the standards, the improved standards, they simply do not apply. And this has an impact again going towards things like our industrial area. So for example, unless someone actually goes ahead and builds up or puts some new properties in our industrial areas like Mill Street, then the water runoff problem simply does not go away. We require people to develop the space, and then we can apply these standards to them. And that improves the quality of life in those areas. I would like the Minister to speak on that and make sure that this is made clear, and if he could speak to applicability of this Plan in any kind of retroactive manner.

And, Mr. Speaker, the last point I would like to make (taking us up to lunch) is the coherence of this Plan with our political and economic direction of Bermuda. We have obviously faced significant events within the last 24 months that have reshaped the landscape of the Island, reshaped the landscape, reshaped our futures. And as we go into a debate after this one, we are actually going to talk about that quite substantively. What I am curious about is how the Minister views this development plan or this draft Bermuda (development) Plan 2018 as coherent or correlating with the political and economic direction of Bermuda, as well as solid development.

So I think the plan itself is quite extensive, covers a lot of territory, does a lot of good work. It has got some challenges. But what I would want the Minister to speak to is how this Plan works on a going-forward basis with our political and economic directions.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time and I conclude my remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time? I do note that it is now 12:25. At 12:30 we would break for lunch. With the indulgence of the House, we can let someone speak for five minutes, or we can break for lunch now and come back at two o'clock.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good morning, Mr. Speaker . . . or good afternoon. If I start now, would I be able to continue after lunch?

The Speaker: We could break now. Then you can start fresh right at lunch.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. I would like to be the first batter up.

The Speaker: Okay. With that said, I will acknowledge MP Famous at two o'clock.

And Members, we will now call on the Deputy Premier, or Premier, to adjourn us for lunch.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Does my video work, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: We can sort your video out at two o'clock when you come. I have already acknowledged that you will be the first speaker at two o'clock.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, would you like to move us to lunch?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

With the indulgence of the House, I move that we adjourn for lunch and return at 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Members, the House now stands adjourned for lunch until 2:00 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:30 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

MOTION

BERMUDA PLAN 2018

[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. It is 2:00 pm. The House is now in session after our lunch break.

Members, for the benefit of the listening audience, we are on the first Order of business for today, which is the motion by the Minister for Home Affairs, the Deputy Premier. And the motion reads:

"THAT this Honourable House take note of 'The Bermuda Plan 2018.'"

The Minister opened in his presentation, he was responded to by the Opposition Whip, and now MP Famous has the floor.

MP Famous, would you like to do your presentation?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me clearly?

The Speaker: I hear you. You could be a little louder, but we hear you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Can you hear me clearly, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, continue on.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry, technology challenges.

Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for my family and I will speak about that on the motion to adjourn. It is also a great day for Bermuda because the Bermuda Plan 2018 was submitted by the Honourable Deputy Premier of Bermuda Walter H. Roban.

I have a lot of concern about his Cup Match choices. But I have no concerns about the way he is passionate about our environment, whether it is locally or regionally or internationally, the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Home Affairs Minister—or even in space—the Deputy Premier puts the environment first and foremost in his concerns.

Can you see me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I just lost you. I was seeing you, but we just lost you off the screen.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I do not know what is going on, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. We see you now.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right. So, Mr. Speaker, in this Bermuda Plan 2018, the Deputy Premier and his team (who were mentioned earlier, and I thank them all for their work) have put a lot of emphasis on the environment. They have put a lot of emphasis on not just a blanket plan for the whole Island, but a plan that addresses each and every parish or community in its individual way.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a big difference from how houses are laid out in town and how they are laid out on the West side or on East Shore Lane. I always admire driving up the country and seeing what big yards you all have up there. Town people would be like, *Wow! That's a lot of space, it's enough to put about three more apartments there. What do you need all that land for?* But, that speaks to how each parish is zoned out differently.

Mr. Speaker, previously there was a piece of land in my neighbourhood, the only empty piece of land in my neighbourhood that a gentleman wanted to build on. But he went through Planning and they told him, *Sorry, but this is zoned as agricultural land, or arable land.* No one has farmed on that land for about 20 years. It has actually become a dumping ground for old bikes and other stuff that should not be dumped. This gentleman wants to develop this land, but because of the tight zoning, he was not able to do so.

What this Plan does is allow for zoning issues to be resolved in a lot quicker timeframe than every 10 years.

Now, there will be some who are concerned about using up our arable land for development, and rightly so. We cannot have a concrete jungle, as the Opposition Whip said. We do not want our children growing up to say, *Where's the green space left?*

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Honourable Member from constituency 23. He was very passionate in his speech, very succinct. I applaud him on that. And he raised a few issues that I would like to address, if possible, Mr. Speaker.

He brought up an issue about objections. In totality, there were 282 objections to different parts of this Plan. However, what the Honourable Member omitted, perhaps mistakenly, was that the majority of these objections were resolved. Now, as we know, in any democracy we cannot please everybody. But the fact that 52-plus per cent of the objections to different aspects of this Plan were resolved needs to be highlighted. It needs to be stated. Because let us not have the narrative that there were almost 300 people objecting to this Plan without any resolution being done.

The other day, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member from constituency 23 spoke about this coastal erosion. And I do not know if you remember, Mr. Speaker, maybe in 2012, or nine years ago, there was a big issue about coastal erosion and that those apartments built across from Swizzle Inn were going to fall into the sea and blah, blah, blah. No such thing has happened. If you go along the same south shore coastline you have the Reefs Hotel to the west, farther to the east you have the Azure development, and you have plenty of houses. I even believe the former Deputy Premier, the Honourable [Bob] Richards, lives on the coast on south shore. I have not seen any coastal erosion.

But, be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, you and I have both travelled to the Cayman Islands where developers there have been allowed to build massive hotels literally on the beach—literally. And no, I do not know who gave them the idea [INAUDIBLE]. But five years later they now have massive coastal erosion. Not only is the sand gone, but now the waves are eating at and undermining the actual coast, the rock and the reinforcement wall.

So, whilst I share the concerns of the Honourable Member from [constituency] 23, I invite him to rent a boat and sail up and down south shore and he will see that the Planning Department of this country has not allowed development that is going to cause coastal erosion.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that the Honourable Member brought up was about traffic. I find it kind of ironic, but I will just address it in this way. Yes, it is kind of horrific what we see with some of the drivers in this country, and that is an issue that has to be dealt with by the police. But what I would say is that the

OBA is a party that would like to see an increase in population in this country. Now, more [people] than just the OBA want to see an increase in population. But with the increase in population there will be an increase in traffic. That is just common sense. You cannot want one thing and not want the other that results from it.

Now, I am not saying that [INAUDIBLE], but what I will say is that with a growth in population we will see a growth in traffic on the roads. Now, the roads do not necessarily fall under the Ministry of Planning. They fall under Public Works. So, I just want that Member, when he raises these concerns, to also give finite solutions to these concerns and/or point out that that does not actually fall under this Plan.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Minister, I want to thank his entire team, and I want to thank specifically my friend, Mr. Jonathan Starling, who put his heart and soul into this, along with others, and I look forward to the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, it is Susan Jackson, I would like to say a few words.

The Speaker: MP Jackson, I hear you faintly, if you can just tune in a little louder it would be good.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: All right. I will see what I can do here. So, I will just speak up.

Thank you and good afternoon everyone and the Members of the Parliament as well as the listening audience.

The Bermuda Plan 2018 is, in my opinion, our opportunity to really strike a balance. There are so many details involved in making sure that the planning and the layout of the topography of this Island is such that it allows for that beautiful balance between what is nature and what is produced and built and constructed. And so, this is for everyone in our community to sort of hold as a responsibility, in my opinion.

It is very difficult to see the bigger picture sometimes when we are faced with each individual person's details and each individual person's household's requirements for their property and what they would like to do. And it is a challenge sometimes to make that distinction about what it is we would like to do to improve our own quality of life versus what we can do to be responsible owners of this beautiful Island.

Before I really get into some of the details of what I would like to bring out [regarding] this Bermuda Plan, [recognise] that we are 63-odd thousand people that have the privilege of living and owning and caring

for this beautiful Island. And as much as we can set the beauty and the uniqueness of Bermuda aside sometimes, because we get caught up in our own personal ambitions to make sure that we have a wonderful lifestyle and a wonderful place to live and play in Bermuda, at the same time there has got to be—in all of us—a thread of responsibility and a thread of consciousness that we, as a population, are responsible for this valuable, unique, beautiful Island. And we must find that balance so that it stays a beautiful, unique Island.

In the Bermuda Plan I did notice three main areas that struck me. One is the idea of, in essence, the merging of commercial and residential. And the other is the health environment, the fact that the Bermuda Plan in sharing the vision that says, *You know what? Whatever we're going to do in Bermuda, let's try to be healthy about it.* If we're going to develop, let's develop in such a way that we take responsibility for people to be able to move about freely, that we would be able to have places for exercise, open spaces for healthy living. And then the third is the environmental impact and what can we as a country do to just lower our carbon footprint. And there is discussion about electric cars and there is discussion about walking trails. And these are all super important from that overall vision of [what] we would like Bermuda to look like and to be as an experience moving into the future.

But we have our challenges, and some of our challenges right now that I see, having read through what I could get through the Bermuda Plan, is that we have some very densely populated areas in Bermuda and we need to make sure that in the future we are able to manage that space well so that our neighbours are all able to live in harmony together, and at the same time we hold on to that balance between what is going to be a densely populated area versus what is going to be open space.

When I think about the increase of population densities, of course the middle of Bermuda, Pembroke, in particular, being one of those areas, it may be strong for me to say [it is] "at risk" but [it is] at risk because we do have a growing number of people that are living there. Now, in transparency I must disclose that the constituency for which I am responsible is Pembroke South West, so there is some skin in the game from that perspective, Mr. Speaker. And then the other side of it is that I have moved into the constituency and I have lived there for about three years now. And so, I am also conscious and aware of the daily differences when we are living in an area that is more densely populated than other areas in Bermuda, and also experiencing what I had mentioned earlier about the sort of merging of commercial versus residential.

So, there is the one thought of *why can't we create . . .* and I am actually going to preface this, Mr. Speaker, by saying that coming out of COVID-19 I personally believe that there are going to be changes

in the way that many of us live our lives and changes in the way that we work. And of course, the obvious one is people are working from home. So, will this be a long-term change of lifestyle where people are working from home more often? And if that is the case, what is that going to look like?

So, I sort of put on my visionary hat and thought about this concept within the Bermuda Plan. It discusses the merging of commercial versus residential. It also kind of has an impact on the fact that commercial versus residential is probably going to be in some of our higher densely populated areas, like Pembroke, and what that might look like. So, there are a number of bullet points within the Bermuda Plan which are worth raising under this idea.

One is the redevelopment, which originally was the sort of North Hamilton redevelopment. And there may be some economic development zones and different labels and names that are given to the idea that we would have an opportunity for commercial investment mixing with residential. So, I am going to look at it from a residential perspective in the first instance.

My understanding of that could be that people would be able to move into a one-, two-bedroom apartment (something that is smaller than a condo, smaller than a home) where they would have the opportunity within that building to have a personal residential lifestyle and, at the same time, there would be the commercial aspect. What that looks like, it could be that there are actually office spaces within the building where people could still be at home, but have their work or [be at] a place where they can go to work. And also, the fact that they are in the centre of town and so it is easier. They do not need a car; they can ride a cycle or walk as their main source of transportation.

So, if we are going to have that kind of mix, which, you know, in theory has definite promise . . . I certainly can attest to having given up a car. I have an electric bike. I live in a one-bedroom apartment in Pembroke. I have my electric bike and I often walk. And that has been my life and I have been able to successfully manage for the last three years with that lifestyle. So I know that it is possible and I know that it is enjoyable and I know that it is super convenient.

But going back to the population density, if we are creating a commercial [area] mixed with residential, are we going to create a bit of an explosion in some of our higher density areas? That was one of the concerns that was sort of raised. And I think it is something that we certainly need to keep an eye on. Yes, it may save some open space in Paget or Devonshire or Sandys or Dockyard, but what is the impact of having maybe more people than we might have thought in one area? Does it have an impact on our safety? Does it have an impact on our health? Does it have an impact on our social interactions? These are

things that, I think, are worth considering as we develop in more densely populated areas.

One of the other observations, maybe even a slight concern, but definitely, Mr. Speaker, it falls under responsibility, and that is the honest truth. There are [some] lots of land that are designated with a residential zoning component that also have some form of rural or agricultural or conservation of open space [designation] that is a part of that lot. And yes, there are people who enjoy living in the central areas. But however they have obtained the property, there is open space that now would be attractive as rezoned for something that would allow for some sort of structure and building on it. And that is a tough one, because then it becomes an individual family's responsibility to weigh the odds of where the balance is between being responsible and having that beautiful sort of mix of open space and population density.

And there is the other side of the balance where, *We are in a developing commercial and residential area, why can't I build on it?* And you know, *I have seen my neighbour who is able to build and maybe build higher with numerous multi floors because the Bermuda Plan has allowed for people to build and build higher*, but what about the person who has a residence which also has acreage of open space? And the idea that even if it was something that was traditional, you know, a cottage style or something that is not around being a high-rise development but cannot expand their property because of the conservation or rural restrictions that were on them. So, it is an emotive environment.

Mr. Speaker, again, we all have to take some responsibility for maintaining and protecting our open spaces. But I can see where it becomes a real conflict when we are in densely populated areas, such as Pembroke, and we are seeing that there is development and population all around us. But the people who are responsible for the open spaces are unable to touch them or develop them but have to remain protectors.

If as we move forward we are able to find any way around that kind of conflict so that it creates more balance, I certainly believe that that will go a long way in helping people who are living in Bermuda to find that balance and continue the enjoyment of life in Bermuda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was a discussion about the City of Hamilton Plan. And, again, I am within my constituency and there was discussion about providing an opportunity for those who have commercial real estate in Hamilton to be able to invite some more residents into commercial, or what has traditionally been commercial, buildings, and add a residential component that. I believe that could be very attractive to a number of people who are interested in not having a car and would prefer to cycle or walk. They like the idea of living in Hamilton and having all the amenities that Hamilton has to offer right in the centre of the

city and being able to live there and work at the same time. So, I believe that there is a lot of promise there.

We have a lot of vacant space. I think the Bermuda Plan said something like 500,000 square feet of vacant commercial space is presently available. When I say “presently” I am still being relative within the time frame of the Bermuda Plan. But that is a lot of vacant space. And it would be in our best interests, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that we take a look at what is already existing before we start embarking on lots of new developments.

Now, there was some discussion . . . and I am moving a little out of my constituency area, but of interest to me was the idea of hotel beds and the idea that our tourism product is changing quite a bit. So, the Bermuda Plan mentions that there are about 1,150 [fewer] hotel beds in Bermuda. And I can remember the number of beds in Bermuda as being a critical inventory for Bermuda because without that we are 1,157 [fewer] people that potentially could stay on the Island. But the residents of Bermuda have grasped the innovation of things like vacation rentals and Airbnb and the likes, and the Bermuda Plan is accommodating that.

The Minister has also spoken about having vacation rental legislation to be able to support vacation rentals and continue to support Airbnb that already has some legislation in place to support it.

But my question is that once . . . and there is the potential that the Airbnb trend may move on, and if the Bermuda Plan is making any kind of accommodation within residential areas that allows for vacation rentals and there is some legislation around that, and whether there is sort of, I do not know, some mixing between tourism zoning and residential zones, whether . . . if the Airbnb/vacation rentals trend moves on and people choose to do other things with the apartments and the guest houses that are on their property, if we have this legislation in place . . . and I have no idea what it is going to say, but basically, would there be a sunset clause?

The reason I am asking that, Mr. Speaker, is because if we let's say allow some sort of zoning in there so it is residential with a bit of a tourism aspect to it, and at some point people stop doing the at-home vacation rentals, the at-home Airbnb, but their apartments or their guest houses are zoned for something else, like as a vacation rental, will that still apply? Or will there be a sunset clause in any legislation that says should you no longer have an Airbnb or should you no longer have a vacation rental, that the zoning and any of the other requirements around that legislation will then revert back to the Residential 1 or the Residential 2? And that we will not see something else showing up in the future because it is kind of piggy-backed off of a piece of legislation that was meant for Airbnb but is now being utilised for something else (of which I cannot give you an example right now, Mr.

Speaker). But clearly, people come up with new ideas for doing different things all the time.

So, the idea that we would be just cognisant of the development of what is a bit of a commercial mix in a residential space around vacation rentals and such, I think is worthy of keeping an eye on and supporting it in any way that we can—by every means support it—but also being able to manage it as things change.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about the idea of decentralising commercial zoning. So, as I understood it from the Bermuda Plan, there is the concept . . . and Mr. Speaker, this is not the first or the last time you will hear me speaking of this because I am a firm believer in that we have a number of villages within . . . I am across from you, so it could be anything anywhere from Flatts to larger areas like Southside and Dockyard that have the opportunity to create a mix between residential and commercial. Now, I have some issues with the mix of residential and commercial, and hopefully I will have a chance to touch on that later. But in this situation it is more around how we can develop areas around Bermuda and still be able to have residences with commercial enterprise that supports the residents of that area.

So, when I visualise something like that I think about places like Somerset Village that has a large residential area. They are a distance from Hamilton. What kind of small business development, what kind of commercial enterprise could we bring to an area (and I am going to use Somerset Village as an example) to make it like this beautiful place where, for convenience sake, for diversity and variety of shopping, there would be a community of small businesses that would be able to nestle into a commercial area and be able to serve the residents of the parish and the immediate area?

I firmly believe that (1) this does an awful lot to promote and increase entrepreneurship in Bermuda, [and (2)] I think it does wonders in developing villages within Bermuda where people can travel to and shop and find unique items and the like. Now, I am not working on the nuts and bolts of the profitability of that, but certainly by nature of the businesses that have been able to start up and thrive in our villages, it is possible. It may take a little work, it may take a little research, it may take some questioning and consulting of people in the area to find out what their needs really are. It does not make sense to put something in a village and it is not what the community needs.

So, I certainly hope that the Government continues with what I understood as being decentralised commercial [zoning] and that there is enough research done to make sure that it is a quality relationship between the residents of an area and the entrepreneurship businesses that are able to support that area and that it stays beautiful, that it meets the needs of the area, and it is something that we all can be proud of.

Now, on the other side of that I know that we have some existing mixed residential/commercial areas in Bermuda, and some of them have been a real bone of contention, Mr. Speaker. And I do not want to call out names, but there are areas in Southampton, there are areas in Paget, there are areas in Sandys, where buildings and businesses have evolved in residential areas and, from a visual perspective, it is causing an impact on the residents of the area. And I am not sure what the answer is, and I certainly give full credit to the Minister and the team at Planning on how to find solutions or workable relationships within some of these areas. But what I am most concerned about is that it will get out of hand, that as these in commercial/industrial areas in predominantly residential parishes or zones, things we traditionally know as residential areas, that as these industrial or commercial areas age, as they continue to grow and more industry and more commercial space is filled, that it does not create an eyesore, Mr. Speaker. That is the bottom line.

What can we do to be responsible? What can we do that is green and is healthy, that will create maybe some sort of border or something to make a distinction between these industrial areas and the residents that are living close by? So, I certainly put that out as a suggestion as we continue to review the Bermuda Plan.

Now, there was a mention, Mr. Speaker, that we would try really hard to review this Plan every five years. It has been a long time coming. I believe that there have been a number of reasons, and valid reasons, why there have been delays with the Bermuda Plan 2018 coming out in its final phase. But we have a responsibility to try to stay on this so that every five years we can review, see what is under threat, see what is working, and make sure that we address the changes and maintain that balance and be responsible, Mr. Speaker, in the protection of our Island.

And Mr. Speaker, I am going to end with a little story. I think that probably one of the more touching messages that my father (the late Albert Jackson) . . . we used to drive home together out of Hamilton at the end of every day. And my father used to say to me that when he would fly into Bermuda—and he loved to fly into Bermuda because he just loved looking at the overall picture, he could see the entire Island. But one of his big concerns each time he would come back from abroad was, you know, *Oh Bermuda, we have got so many white roofs*. And certainly, he was born and raised at a time when Bermuda was predominantly green. And so, he could see the addition and the increase of the white roofs over Bermuda over his lifetime.

And we have limited space, Mr. Speaker. There are not many more places for us to go. We do not really create any man-made land here, which I am glad for. We do not reclaim acres and acres of land. And so, I guess I just really want Bermuda to have a

full appreciation of just how valuable this Island is. And for each one of us who has our two feet touching this Island [to appreciate] the responsibility, the privilege, and for me the honour of being Bermudian and taking responsibility for the Island is huge. And I am hoping that we can all have that sense of pride and ownership. And even when our small personal desires to improve our lives and our land, what we choose to do with our land, yes, those things are going to come into the forefront. But if we can just, in our hearts also, consider the fact that as much of the open beauty and the uniqueness of Bermuda that we can keep, so that we do have a balance for open space, is in our hearts, then I believe that we will, as a country, make the right decisions to maintain a balance and be responsible citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know the environment is a passion of mine.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: In fact, just last weekend I went over to the Bermudiana Beach Club and just took a walk along the beach. I had my grandson, my daughter and her husband. And, again, I was amazed with the coastal erosion that has transpired over the years and the devastation that it is causing. We talk about going to Alaska to see the calving of the icebergs. Well, we do not have to go too far to see the calving of our cliff faces here in Bermuda.

It was astounding. I took some pictures. It is a shame that I cannot put them on our website so we can see them. It is not something that you can ignore. And my concern is that we are having more and more buildings built on our coast. And I am very, very concerned about the impact that this may have on the safety of the properties being built and the impact on our coast.

As you know, coastal erosion results primarily from global warming and the increased frequency and intensity of our hurricanes. And until we address climate change and global warming this will continue. And so I would encourage the Government and the Minister to do more to have a larger setback against these coastlines because it will become very, very

dangerous to people using our beaches as well as the residents who live on our coast.

I know that as a young boy I would go over that beach and actually walk down the hill to a path from Southshore to the beach. Now I cannot even walk down that path. They had to build a staircase about 30 to 40 feet high to get on the beach. When I was a youngster that was unheard of. Unheard of! And it also inhibits the use of the beach by our seniors who basically spent their lifetime on that beach, because of the coastal erosion.

So again, my recommendation would be for the Government to consider a larger setback in regard to any planning applications that are presented that impact our coastline.

The other issue, while talking on hurricanes, is our flooding issues. And what comes to mind is the old airport. When we had a hurricane from the south, they had the flooding. Then we have the Causeway issue and remember the hurricane, again [in] 1986 (I think) when the Causeway was destroyed and St. George's was cut off for a couple of weeks. Again, we have to address our low-lying areas and provide mitigation strategies for climate change/global warming because these issues, these risks, are here to stay.

Unfortunately, [those issues are] not much of our doing because we are a small nation. We know that the industrialised nations—China, the US, and other larger nations—are responsible for global warming and we are just impacted by it like many other small nations.

The other interesting flooding area is Mills Creek. Mills Creek is a low-level area. With the rise in our water levels we are finding that this area is flooded more and more. And again, what mitigation tools can we put in place to address those challenges in regard to our low-lying areas?

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, that is dear to my heart is agricultural land. If I remember correctly, most of the complaints that we have received have to do with converting agricultural land back to residential or commercial. For the life of me—and this is a personal point of view—I am a proponent of maintaining, and in fact increasing, our agricultural land. This will help us to become more economically self-sufficient and it will help [to maintain] food security in this country. I would invite the Minister to do all that he can to ensure that our agricultural land is not encroached upon and that we can build up an inventory of agricultural land and do less to in fact compromise the acreage that we have for our agricultural land.

To me most Bermudians like to put their fingers in the soil. Most Bermudians would like to have a little garden in the backyard. As you know, we have these community gardens and they have been around and almost all of them get taken up as soon as they become available. To me that is an indication that agriculture is important to Bermudians and important to the preservation of our agricultural industry.

So again, this is a primary resource for our agricultural industry. It has been reduced by at least a thousand acres from years in the past. And as custodians of this land, we must do our bit to preserve our agricultural land in this country.

You know, again, how does global warming impact agriculture? As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have many hurricanes, high winds, and the farmers lose a lot of produce, be it vegetables, citrus fruits, flowers and the likes and decorative trees, because of hurricanes.

Mr. Speaker, global warming also impacts that industry in a colossal way. As you know, the farmers find it very difficult to insure their crops, so they lose thousands and thousands of dollars per year because of high winds and hurricanes, which are a result of climate change and global warming.

The other issue that I am sensitive to, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of vulnerable ecosystems. And here I am talking about coral reefs, the mangroves (which have been compromised over the years), our marine nurseries, and caves.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, our coral reefs and mangroves act as an ecosystem. They are a breeding ground for flora and fauna and juvenile fish species. And they also are reducing. I take the view, Mr. Speaker, that somehow, we need to provide resources that will allow this country to redevelop a number of mangroves. Somehow, we can provide the plants to replant and regenerate some of the mangroves lost because of our hurricanes and because of development and the run-off of development and other dangerous chemicals which have [penetrated] and infiltrated our groundwater.

Mr. Speaker, while on global warming and the carbon footprint, I think the Government should also—and I will support them 100 per cent—have a campaign to plant trees in this country. Trees mitigate the reduction of CO₂. And these trees can be decorative trees; they can be fruit trees, trees that can form an ecosystem amongst themselves like mini-forests. Our fruit trees, I mean, last year we had issues with the banana trees. When was the last time one had seen citrus trees? And again, in the past the citrus trees were used to provide healthy fruit for our community. We need to have a national plan that will address our fruit trees and make the production of local fruit an everyday event for our young people and those committed to addressing reducing our carbon footprint and providing food security and healthy produce in this country.

So, I would invite the Minister to also have a look to see what type of incentives we can have so that we, as a country, can have more fruit trees, orchards in this country so that we become more self-sufficient when it comes to the production of fruit in this country. We can do it if we set our mind to it.

I know that we have done a lot of work in the Planning Department and I applaud them for the work

that is being done. And I just would like to continue to encourage them to ensure that green energy standards are embedded and, in fact, insisted upon in our planning and development regulations when it comes to [the] development of residential and commercial properties.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I would like to address is the issue of invasive species, be they plants or animals. Again, they compromise the productivity of our fruit, flowers, vegetables and even some of our plants. And I am thinking of like Kudzu, the Mexican peppers, the casuarina trees. Again, we need to address those invasive species so that we can have more endemic plants thrive and survive in this country and add to the beautiful garden paradise that we have.

The other issue that I did not see much about (and I may have missed it) is in regard to the management of Bermuda's waste. I know we have the incinerator plant and I know that we have the dump in North Hamilton. Time and time again there was talk about having a national park in that area. Now, I understand the issues in regard to the thermal heat that exists in that area, but I am certain that certain parts of that site could be made available for a national park. Again, it would have to form part of the Park system and has to be integrated with a waste management plan for this country. And again, I know when the Minister asked [if] the vent was there, he was quoting the amount of trash that this country produces. And somehow it has to be managed so that we can have a healthier country and healthier water lands and healthier soil so that we can have more productive and healthier produce and environment.

We have said a lot about the coastal reserves, the conservation areas, the national parks, the nature reserves and open space reserves. I know that most of these reserves have a management plan. I know that. But I think the Government could do more to share the details of those management plans with the people of this country so that they, too, can be involved in the management of our parks and nature areas and open space reserves. I mean, if you go out to Spittle Pond it is still pristine and you will see a number of birds—migratory birds, and native birds there. And I think the conservation plan should be conducive to allowing those types of environment to be attractive to some of these migratory birds and other animals that will enhance the beauty of our reserves.

The final point that I would like to speak to, Mr. Speaker, is that I would like for the Minister to provide more details on landfills. Where are we on that? Are we at the end of the landfills for Bermuda? I know currently when we get rid of our cars and when we get rid of our washers in our houses, get rid of our stoves, they go down to the airport and the landfill. How long are we going to allow this to happen? How will this be addressed from a planning point of view,

from a developmental point of view? The impact on the surrounding area is questionable and it needs to be addressed at some point or the other.

Mr. Speaker, generally, I welcome the 2018 Plan. I have some concerns and reservations which I just spoke to and I hope that they will be addressed and that the Minister will share my concerns and empathy for the direction that we are going in regard to the impact of climate change and the impact of over-development of this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

Before I call on any other Members to make a contribution, I just want to call on the Minister just to clarify. As you know, I was in between the Chair coming back when he started this morning, and the wording of the motion that is on the Order Paper needed to have an amendment made to it. I know the Minister spoke to it, but I do not know if the actual wording needed was asked for [as an] amendment.

We asked for the indulgence to have this matter dealt with before the other matter that was ahead of this. That was done. But I am not clear on whether the wording was adjusted in the actual motion.

So I am going to call on the Minister just to clarify that, so the House is clear on it. I would not want to do it at the end when we are finished; I want us to do it now while we are still in the debate.

Minister, if you do not mind?

AMENDMENT TO MOTION

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, of course, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to oblige. I will just repeat to you the motion that I read so that, perhaps, if it needs clarification, we can do it.

I said: *I move that the House do now take under consideration the following motion, notice of which was given on the 21st of May 2021: THAT this Honourable House supports the Bermuda Plan 2018.*

That is the full motion that I read, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Because on the Order Paper it just says that we "take note," it does not say "support." So, the amendment is asking for the support of the House rather than just taking note.

So, Members, the indulgence now is that you accept the motion as it is stated now, versus what was written on paper on the Order Paper today.

Any objections to that?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Motion amended from a "take note motion" to a "motion of support."]

The Speaker: Thank you for your indulgence.

Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No problem, Mr. Speaker. No problem.

The Speaker: The Opposition Leader just completed his presentation.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

There is no other Member?

Minister, it looks like we were at the end of it.

Okay, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you for the contributions made on this measure.

Just to restate it, *THAT this Honourable House supports the Bermuda Plan 2018*, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I think it has been made crystal clear by, certainly, my submissions earlier today and by what has been articulated by a number of Members, that this is a very important Plan. It has a certain historical significance in that it is going to be taking the direction of development in a different way, not in the way that, perhaps, has been familiar to many, but the changes being made are going to make development and the process of going towards development very different. It is not going to be necessarily more cumbersome, but it is going to have added protection for the environment, added attention to the specific issues of community, but also, added attention to what development needs to look like over the next 10, even 20 years, or longer.

So, it has been designed in a way to bring balance, balance to all those three key priorities and, specifically, balance between the community interests, balance between development interests, but balanced with the environmental interests, which we can no longer ignore, Mr. Speaker. The issue of our natural environment and its protection and its preservation and sustainability is as important as everything else we are dealing with. And I think that has to be appreciated now.

There are some people who have, I would argue, done very well in the process of development over recent decades. And we credit their efforts because they have contributed to a country that, irrespective of the increased development, still looks still as picturesque, still is enjoyed and still admired for our unique architecture, our unique way of approaching development and our unique lifestyle and how we look in the face of the global community. We are admired. But it does not mean that we do not give attention go-

ing forward to how we are going to protect our natural environment in the future, how we are going to manage development in the future as we will have more development needs, as we seek to, as we are focusing on now, on rebuilding our economy, on ensuring that jobs in the area of all the areas of development are maintained or are sustainable, but also, how we will develop our communities going forward.

And there has been a different history over decades on how communities in different parts of the Island have been treated around development. Well, some of that has been good, some of that has not been good, but we are looking for balance going forward in the future. So, that is why the Plan—the Bermuda Development Plan 2018—is the start of a new process where communities will have priority and the community's interests will have a priority.

So, and I have said . . . and I have used this example before, Mr. Speaker, what will be the interest for Sandys and the development needs of Sandys going forward? What will we look at differently in Pembroke? Rather than the current process which almost has a cookie-cutter approach, which every 10 years they look at zoning for everybody and there is a kind of a blanket—there has been in the past—a blanket sort of review. No. That is not how we are going to do it. It is quite likely, going forward, with the appropriate changes to the Development and Planning Act [1974] and some other things that we will bring forward to this House, that there will be more intermittent looks at zoning in different parts of the Island. So that issues that arise from parish to parish, from community to community, will be addressed in a much more precise way to address the needs of those communities and how they would like to see issues of development handled within those spaces. Which I think will make many, many people happier in many ways because, as you have seen from the presentation of what we are doing, is that many people are still looking for zoning changes that will potentially look at removing certain conservation and agricultural provisions. And I think we know now that that is not always a good thing and, in some cases, it may merit some consideration.

But that is the balance that we have to actually approach, Mr. Speaker, in looking at these issues community by community because it might be that as we . . . as I found with my exhaustive requirement to review something like 600-odd pages of a zoning tribunal's work, in that there are some areas that have been zoned for generations, for instance agriculture, where there is no agriculture that has been going on in recent memory. And when you look at the land itself it is not necessarily appropriate for modern agriculture. But at the same time, there are areas where protections need to even be raised because, perhaps, those areas are having pressure on them from development and they border an area that needs greater protection.

So, there has got to be a balance, Mr. Speaker, with all these issues. As we have progressed over recent decades and as you . . . if anyone goes through the process that I went through with this, I had to—and I took the time—to look at visual maps going back to the 1940's in some areas of Bermuda to see the evolution of development so that I could actually make sound, well-informed decisions, about some of the issues that were raised by the tribunal. And you can see the path of development in some areas and how some paths of development have been sensible and maybe some, there needs to be some issues raised, or we now have an opportunity to provide greater protection in areas where there were not the appropriate protections.

So, balance is actually, I believe, the vision of the Plan going forward, this Bermuda Plan 2018. And we, along with the team in Planning, look forward to engaging with the community going forward on how we continue work with them. Because this is not just about the Government imposing certain rules and regulations on the community, it is us working with the community to shape development going forward.

So, I just wanted to do those somewhat introductory remarks and I am going to address some of the questions that have been raised, Mr. Speaker. And I will go through them and I am certain, if any questions do arise that I do not hit, that I welcome any after-debate feedback from Members who may . . . questions will arise even from this debate that their constituents may ask and they might want an answer and I welcome the opportunity to answer those questions.

One of the questions was, how does the Plan support economic growth moving forward? Well, that, I think my previous comments speak to that. It is all about balance. Certainly, this Government is working on plans to re-engineer Bermuda's economy [to] re-shape it and planning and development has a very big role in that. And just through my own experience through the pandemic period, Mr. Speaker, much to the credit of the Planning team led by Ms. Victoria Pereira, we kept the process of the consideration of development applications going through much of the pandemic period. That allowed, coming out, for people to immediately start working once we came out of the shelter-in-place order last year. And that certainly helped keep food on the table and kept some level of economic activity going for the country. That is the crucial role that this Plan and how it is shaped and managed will play in that, even in the most crucial, hard, delicate times, if we can keep certain sectors of the economy going because of efficient process of consideration of planning applications and, you know, working with developers, we can keep sections of our economy moving and keeping people employed and keeping some level of quality of life maintained.

But the policies that we will shape going forward, because with the approval of this Plan certain

new policies might be adjusted and shaped, even as we do some things that we might be discussing later about creating a lot more stringent rules around building and raising efficiency and conservation measures in building, that will create new opportunities in development that can, potentially, help the economy as well. So, that is why we need to ensure we achieve balance, Mr. Speaker, going forward and I hope that answers that question.

There was another question from the Honourable Member Mr. Richardson regarding flooding in industrial areas. The answer to that I would like to give is that the department is certainly aware of the importance of industrial areas, especially areas like Mills Creek,—and that whole area, not just Mills Creek, but that whole area of Pembroke certainly has a history of industrialisation—when it comes to flooding, and there have been, as we all know, instances of flooding and challenges around flooding in that area. The draft Bermuda Plan has within its policies [to] address these particular areas when it comes to the erection of new developments and their potential to impact the area of flooding. And their policies are designed to reduce or eliminate future flooding impacts. And this is where the balance comes in because raising, particularly, not only the development priority which is there but the environment priority, so we will give greater attention in certain areas and this is the specificity of dealing with development in particular areas.

As new development arises in those industrial areas, the environmental factors and considerations will be raised as a higher priority, Mr. Speaker, because that now is equal to our development priorities. And there will be mitigation strategies, Mr. Speaker, that will have to be employed to directly address the issue of flooding. And we will also, I think, have to work with the owners of the properties there. If they wish for mitigation strategies to be deployed they will have to work with the department, they will have to work with other agencies of government to ensure they are in place, because this cannot be just—and I am going to be very straightforward here, Mr. Speaker—the Government fixing the problems where private development has created the challenge. We cannot have that anymore. We cannot have where private developers have done what they wanted to do in an area and then, when problems arise, they come to the Government to fix [it]. That is not how it is going to happen going forward, Mr. Speaker. It is going to be working together with private development to mitigate problems that arise as a result of development.

So, I hope that that is something that is taken on and it is understood and that is how we are going to shape things forward.

Going forth with some other questions, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member Ms. Susan Jackson, I believe, had a question about development and zoning, is this for a reason? I think. Is that the question?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. This practice . . . an answer that my team has advised me on that was . . . because with the theme of MP Jackson's statement. So, the answer is this in that around development and zoning exists . . . development and zoning around development exists for a reason, as do conservation zones. And there has to be a balance, as I think is the theme of this Plan, balance, finding balance. That the Plan cannot allow what I will freely use language frankly to say, Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow a "free-for-all" with development. We understand that people may have opportunities they would like to pursue, but we cannot have a free-for-all. We cannot allow development for development's sake.

So, whilst we support development and we will continue to support development—and that is the role that the Planning Department does, it helps to support and shape development—an element of control has to be in place, Mr. Speaker, and greater density is permitted where it will make sense. We are not going to allow creation of mass density in areas that clearly do not complement the wider area around it, which is, perhaps, in the preservation of green space. And I can assure you that a number of these situations I did have to address in my consideration of the Plan.

And we sympathise with the desires of certain persons who own land who may want an opportunity, but what they are seeking will actually destroy a certain consistency in the area based on their development wishes. So, we have to balance that. I have spoken to Planning about this and we have been discussing these issues over recent years, that we encourage developers to come and talk to them, share their plans and future aspirations around development so that the Planning Department and its team, who are the most experienced team on the Island in this area, without a doubt, can help them shape their plans and let them know what can happen, what can be done, and how, perhaps, their vision can be achieved within means of the Planning Regulations. But it has to make sense. Mr. Speaker, it must make sense.

Another comment here about conservation reserves zones . . . oh, yes, an issue came up. It might have been the Honourable Opposition Leader about or, perhaps [it was], Ms. Jackson, about conservation management plans for different areas that are under conservation zoning. At the moment conservation management plans are only required, Mr. Speaker, for areas where development is being contemplated or is proposed. And it is typical for where a significant development is being done or a significant change to an area of land is being done that a conservation management plan is required.

I think that is going to become the norm as conservation is important. So, even as people seek development, we look to preserve the green that may

be around the development and that it is keeping with the theme and with the interests of the land around it. So conservation management plans, certainly, for major developments are becoming pretty much standard, but at the same time, we do ensure that they are in place where any development is contemplated.

A question was raised, Mr. Speaker, about landfills. Land fill-ins are the responsibility of the Ministry of Works, so I would ask the Honourable Members, if they have a question, to put it to the Minister of Public Works, that is not really the jurisdiction of Planning.

There was a question or comment made about agricultural land and how much of that land is zoned across the Island. And just as information, there is just over 700 acres, around 737 acres, of agricultural land that is properly zoned as agricultural land. And to my remembrance, about half of that is actually actively being used as agriculture.

So, it says a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. There certainly is no desire in any of our policies and any intention, Mr. Speaker, for us to reduce that number I can assure you. And I, as the Minister responsible for Planning and the Environment and Agriculture and all things to do with that will certainly continue to look for ways to increase that number, if I can. And I certainly welcome the support of the community as well as Members of this House to do that, where we can find more land to put within agricultural zoning, if that is feasible, or we will take the opportunity to do that because agriculture is important and having and preserving our agriculturally zoned land is important. Now about half of that is actually being actively used at the moment and, certainly, we look forward to working with private and public sector partners with increasing the activity of agriculture in a reasonable way throughout the Island in some way.

Mr. Speaker, just as a last comment, not only the traditional forms of agriculture, but also the alternative and newer developed forms of agriculture are also welcome as well. So, if persons want to introduce certain newer forms of agriculture, whether it be vertical farming, whether it be aquafarming, whether it be hydroponics or any of the other—which actually are based on using much land conservatively to maximise yield and development . . . yield of agricultural products in a certainly safe, healthy and sound way, we welcome those proposals to come to us if people want to begin to talk about how they can do some of these more innovative forms of farming and agriculture in Bermuda. We welcome the opportunity to work with them in this Ministry.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do believe I have answered all of the questions in this debate. And those are my final comments at this time.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, the question has to be put now as to . . . because the Motion was changed asking that the House approve the Plan.

So, the question is now put, Does the House approve the Bermuda Plan 2018?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

So, I would like to move the Motion, if I need to restate it again, that this House approves the Bermuda Plan 2018.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any Member . . . any objections to that?

There are none.

It has been approved.

[Motion carried: The Honourable House supports the Bermuda Plan 2018.]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Members of the House, for your support.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Honourable Members for your contributions.

We will now move on to the second Order on the Order Paper for today, which is a motion by the Minister of Finance. And similar to the motion that was done earlier, the Minister has an amendment to his motion.

So, Minister, as I call on you I would ask you to put the amendment so that we can have the amendment agreed on before we proceed. And I am calling on the indulgence of the House to allow us to put the amendment.

Minister.

MOTION

BERMUDA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN, SUMMARY REPORT

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AMENDMENT TO MOTION

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the amended motion should read as follows:

“THAT this Honourable House supports Bermuda’s Economic Recovery Plan, Summary Report.”

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the amendment to this as it is now worded?

There are no objections?

[Motion carried: Motion amended from a “motion to take note” to a “motion of support.”]

The Speaker: Minister, now put the motion.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now take under consideration the following motion, notice of which was given on the 26th of March 2021:

THAT this Honourable House supports Bermuda’s Economic Recovery Plan, Summary Report.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide opening remarks on the discussion in this Honourable House of the Government’s Economic Recovery Plan to take Bermuda beyond the pandemic.

Much has been said and we have all had our own first-hand experiences of the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has hurt people and economies globally and Bermuda has not been exempted. However, when we look at what has happened in other parts of the world, Bermuda has much to be thankful for. Government has had to make many challenging decisions, but the tremendous support and dedicated commitment from the people of Bermuda have helped to limit the health impact of the pandemic on our shores.

It is an unfortunate reality that taking proactive steps to arrest the spread of the pandemic in terms of case numbers and deaths has an economic cost and impacts economic growth. However, this Government recognises that we could not compromise on our commitment to the health and well-being of our people. We also committed to and took strong and decisive action to provide financial support to persons and entities negatively impacted by this crisis. For the most part, those industries that rely heavily on face-to-face interactions, such as hospitality, transport and entertainment have been most challenged and there has been less impact on sectors such as financial services, that were able to continue to operate while maintaining social distancing or working remotely. Therefore, providing targeted financial support was an important aspect of actions taken since the onset of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the development of the Economic Recovery Plan was another critical step in helping Bermuda deal with the challenges of the pandemic. Government recognised at an early stage that it was important to proactively consider what would be needed to take Bermuda beyond the pandemic. Thus, considerable time, effort, and resources were also invested in formulating an appropriate plan for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, by way of historical context, I would note that Bermuda’s economy has never been able to fully recover from the economic downturn in 2009. While many countries, such as the US, were able to use monetary policy by increasing money sup-

ply and keeping interest rates low in order to re-energise their economies, Bermuda with no central bank, was not able to do the same. What this meant is that while the US economy consistently grew by on average 2.3 per cent per year from 2009 onwards, Bermuda has experienced an average growth rate of (negative) -1 per cent from 2011 to 2018. Combined with now outstanding Government debt of \$3 billion and a debt ceiling of \$3.5 billion, it is clear to see that Bermuda is facing a fiscal cliff edge. This, coupled with the results of the unprecedented economic impact of the pandemic and the various external threats the country is facing, means that we cannot afford to be complacent and timely and prudent action to address these issues is required.

Implementing the Economic Recovery Plan will be key to addressing the systemic and economic challenges that are currently in front of us. While the Government cannot control the global economic fallout that is the result of the pandemic, the Government can and has developed a plan to stimulate job growth, tackle inequality, and help shape the future of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Economic Recovery Plan [ERP] is a forward-looking plan that aims to deliver a better, more inclusive future for everyone in Bermuda. With this in mind, the ERP has been established through research and interviews with key stakeholders and there has been extensive input from around the Cabinet table. The Economic Advisory Committee established in May of 2020 has also provided valuable advice throughout the process. And input from the Financial Policy Council, the Fiscal Responsibility Panel and other key stakeholders has also been sought. We are grateful for all the input and feedback that has been provided by so many committed people.

To ensure that the ERP is practical and credible, a prudent fiscal strategy for Government's finances involving key guardrails was instituted in order to keep Bermuda on the right fiscal track. Fiscal guidelines were drawn from comparisons with jurisdictions with similar credit ratings. Projected fiscal outcomes for the various initiatives in the ERP respect these guardrails which address Bermuda's capacity to pay back debt and to minimise the risk of a credit downgrade. As such, it is the Government's intention that Bermuda targets a return to a balanced budget in three fiscal years by fiscal 2023/24 and respects the \$3.5 billion ceiling on total debt outstanding. And in line with similarly single A-rated countries, ratios of gross debt to GDP and net debt to GDP do not exceed 55 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the pandemic has also laid bare the stark realities of some of the structural issues and inequities in our economy, many of which have been decades in the making. The ERP recognises and takes steps to address these issues. Therefore, in developing the ERP,

the Government has been guided by six key principles:

1. combatting the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 as a priority;
2. reducing the cost of living;
3. achieving fairness and equity;
4. financial viability;
5. fiscal prudence; and
6. timely, decisive action.

Mr. Speaker, the ERP contains a total of 31 priority initiatives which were drawn from the Government's 2020 platform and Throne Speech vision and shaped by the input received. They can be broadly categorised into seven key themes:

1. Diversifying Bermuda's economy through growth of new industries with co-investment from the private sector, including allowing Bermudians themselves to invest. For example, whether it be tourism, whether it be farming, small and medium-sized enterprise marketplaces, residential schemes, the casino industry, subsea communications and the space strategy.
2. Making financial markets work better for businesses and consumers. Examples would include lowering interest rates, COVID-19 SME support, and the national digital bank initiative.
3. Building critical new infrastructure or enhancing existing infrastructure. Examples: shore-side facility for fishing, water and waste management facility, and electric vehicle recharging stations.
4. Expanding the resident population, for example, through short-term measures, such as the introduction of the Economic Investment Certificate as well as medium-term initiatives, such as regularising the position of long-term residents and making it easier for Bermudians born overseas to return home.
5. Introducing labour market reforms and social development measures to deliver skills, employment, and economic security in the future economy. By way of example, the execution of a job strategy and youth employment strategy, establishing national unemployment insurance, and implementation of minimum and living wage legislation.
6. Reforming the delivery of health care. For example, through the introduction of an affordable universal health care system and by reducing the costs of medicines.
7. Developing supported legal and regulatory frameworks. For example, the Energy Regulatory Sandbox, digital FinTech, green development zone, et cetera.

Referencing the key initiatives against international benchmarks research shows that if we are successful in the implementation of the policy initiatives, Bermuda should experience 1.3 to 1.5 per annum

above base economic growth in 2023 leading to an improvement in Bermuda's fiscal position assuming a reasonable growth trajectory for the world economy as currently predicted by the IMF.

Mr. Speaker, the priority initiatives outlined in the ERP have been developed alongside several parallel and substantive initiatives that are underway and will have a positive impact on the Bermudian economy. These include: education reform, tax reform, pension reform, as well as additional policies to support Bermuda's international business sector, including in the highly competitive search for climate-related financial opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, as I bring these opening remarks to a close I would note that, similar to other countries around the world, Bermuda's road to recovery will have its challenges as persons and businesses adapt to post-pandemic new norms. There will be opportunities which can be developed and some sectors will recover quickly. However, for others the transition will be more difficult. Government has stepped up to the challenge during the pandemic to help people and businesses in their time of need. As emergency support starts to wind down, actions in relation to the ERP will be at the forefront of shaping the recovery. Continued Government leadership and resilience are now needed to further develop and successfully execute these plans for future health and growth.

Before handing it over to my ministerial colleagues so that they can elaborate on their own initiatives, let me just discuss one that relates to the Ministry of Finance, which is to reduce the cost of mortgages by lowering interest rates through measures to increase competition in the banking sector and by working with local banks to provide security for mortgage loans. Bermudians throughout the generations have seen owning a piece of the rock as a goal to be pursued. With the considerable growth in the economy that has taken place, particularly within the last 50 years, available land has become more scarce and with increased demand the cost of real estate has increased considerably. Although there has been some moderation in prices in the last 10 years, it is recognised that purchasing land or a home is a major investment that remains a challenge for many.

Government is sensitive to the desires and dreams of its residents and, therefore, is committed to taking active steps to help our people in that regard. Therefore, creating affordable housing is a priority initiative that has been and continues to be actively pursued. In addition, Government sees it as important to consider ways to address the cost associated with purchasing this important investment and, in particular, those related to mortgages. We do not anticipate taking steps that would result in Bermuda becoming a large banking centre as this would create considerable change in Bermuda's risk profile in a way that is not seen as prudent for our economy. However, some expansion of the banking sector is seen as positive

and there continues to be ongoing dialogue on development in that regard. We anticipate that the increased competition and access to services that will result from that will be positive for consumers.

In relation to the cost of financing, I would note that given the makeup of Bermuda's economy, we are heavily impacted by developments in other countries, particularly the United States. For Bermuda, with our dollar pegged to the US dollar and the US being a significant trading partner, interest rate movements and other related factors can therefore be significantly impacted by the US economy. This creates complications for effectively addressing financial matters such as this. However, we remain committed to having the necessary dialogues with the banks and soliciting input from our expert economic advisors to come up with appropriate solutions to assist our fellow Bermudians achieve the goal of affordable and accessible mortgage financing.

Mr. Speaker, I will now hand over the discussion to my ministerial colleagues who can elaborate on the initiatives for which they will provide leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for your opening remarks.

Are there any other Members who would like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any Honourable Member?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is it Minister Furbert?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, I will if the Opposition does not speak.

The Speaker: MP—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will yield to the Minister.

The Speaker: I am sorry, Opposition Leader?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will yield to the Minister, I will speak after the Minister.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister Furbert, you have the floor.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I think it is traditional in these debates that we would have an Opposition speaker

follow the main speaker. Suddenly, the Opposition Leader wants to—

The Speaker: Well, the Opposition Leader has yielded.

What will happen is that the Opposition Leader, as the first speaker for the Opposition, will still have a lengthier time than the Minister who is speaking now. But he has yielded and the Minister has the floor.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: But it seems quite unusual and that is why I raised the point. Normally on a debate of significance we would have the Opposition following.

The Speaker: It is all right. It is not declared that it has to be in that order.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Understood, Mr. Speaker. [INAUDIBLE]

The Speaker: The first speaker of either side will get the 60 minutes; all other speakers of either side will get 30 minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: [INAUDIBLE], Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister Furbert.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem speaking before the Opposition because it is clear that we have to lay out our plan and our vision.

Mr. Speaker, we speak to an economic plan, it means that the Progressive Labour Party has a vision in regard to economic recovery. And you just heard the Minister lay out some points in specific and what we will try to do is get a little more in detail. Mr. Speaker, I recognise, and we recognise, that the last 15 months has been a tough period. Many of us, many our people, have been frustrated and some have, to a certain degree, become discouraged. And Mr. Speaker, we recognise that these last 15 months have left people wondering about their own future. And let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that the Government recognises the pain that some people have gone through or have been going through for that period.

The Progressive Labour Party laid out its vision, Mr. Speaker, in 2017 and in 2019. And yes, Mr. Speaker, some people have forgotten it because the COVID-19 pandemic has got in the way of clearly thinking about where we are. Our Premier, the Honourable David Burt, the Honourable Minister [of Health], Kim Wilson, have worked tirelessly, Mr. Speaker, and have done a great job in keeping us safe. However, Mr. Speaker, as they work many of our Ministers and caucus members have been dis-

cussing about the future, how do we deal with some issues?

Mr. Speaker, so let me get back to that vision. Too many people . . . many people, as you must know, Mr. Speaker, have died with a vision, have died with their . . . died with what they really wanted to accomplish in life. Myles Munroe said *the graveyard is the richest place on earth, because it is here that you will find all the hopes and dreams that were never fulfilled, the books that were never written, the songs that were never sung, the inventions that were never shared, the cures that were never discovered, all because someone was too afraid to take the first step, take up the problem or determined to carry out their dreams.*

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Labour Party will carry out its vision.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Ministry of the Cabinet Office dream every day of how we can make Bermuda a better place and enrich our people and hope and make sure they fulfil what they want to do. Mr. Speaker, we speak about economic recovery, we speak about something that will take place, we speak about vision and we speak about the initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working on several initiatives. Hopefully in the 30 minutes that I have, Mr. Speaker, which have been allotted to me, will give me sufficient time to lay out the vision of the Progressive Labour Party and where we hope to go on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, so that the public is aware, these initiatives will create jobs, jobs, jobs and more jobs. They will allow entrepreneurs to surface. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it will help us grow our GDP, will enhance our balance of payment, will reduce the cost of certain food products. And thank God it will help to grow Government's revenue.

So Mr. Speaker, the recovery plan speaks to seven main themes. I will speak to one of them, and that is diversifying Bermuda's economy through the growth of new industries. By bringing in private sector investment along with Government's own financial commitment Bermuda will launch new industries in fields such as medical tourism, vertical farming, casinos, and subsea communications. The Government will also stimulate existing economic activity in key sectors, for example, by creating an online marketplace for small businesses and making it easier to invest in the residential property on the Island. Many of these indicators will be constructed in such a way as to allow part ownership by Bermudians themselves, enabling a new generation of investors to create lasting wealth for themselves and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I personally will speak to the following: the Shoreside facility to process fish, medical tourism, vertical farming and working with start-ups to lower food costs.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal first with the Shore-side fishing industry. Mr. Speaker, the Government

will complete the Shoreside [Fishing] Facility. I know the Opposition Leader asked some questions last week, so we will complete the Shoreside Facility to process fish caught in Bermuda while supporting a cooperative approach, or cooperative purchase, I should say, of larger shipping vessels, increase the domestic capture of fish, reducing imports and providing the option for exporting fish.

The BEDC has formed a steering committee, Mr. Speaker, made up of representatives from the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources and the Fishermen's Association of Bermuda. The steering committee is updating the previous business plan and the design plans for the project based on current economic conditions as well as taking into account short- to long-term fisheries development factors. But the business plan is taking into consideration the current and potential future revenue streams required to make the facility sustainable while also factoring in later phase initiatives aimed at growing the local fishery industry and making it more profitable.

The steering committee, Mr. Speaker, has been meeting as a collaborative group since March 2021. It is anticipated that this planning phase of the work will be completed by July 2021. Consultation meetings with the broader fishing community will take place in late June 2021 through July 2021. The steering committee will subsequently progress to the construction phase of the plans in conjunction with implementing a phased approach to the cooperative business model, inclusive of all aspects of facility and membership governance.

Mr. Speaker, as I said last time, no construction companies have been contracted as of yet as the steering committee has not yet completed the business and design phase of this project. When that is completed and upon the receipt of planning and building permits, the steering committee will follow a process for tendering quotes for bids for construction and construction is not anticipated to be completed until October or November 2021.

So Mr. Speaker, you will not be surprised, I have got some information, some data here so people can be aware. Locally, as far as fishing is concerned, in 2019 there were 376 metric tons of fish caught by our local fishermen—376,000 metric tons were caught by our local fishermen in 2019. It has come down since 2015, which at that time was 402,000. But Mr. Speaker, are you aware as far as the number of [tons of] fish that are actually imported? People would be surprised at the amount of fish that has been imported and I am going to give you the number, Mr. Speaker. The number of metric tons that was imported in 2018 was 2,000 metric tons compared to 300-some thousand in our local fish, 1,300 in 2019 and in 2020 about 1,000 metric tons of foreign fish.

Mr. Speaker, \$14.6 million was spent on importing fish in 2018, \$13.9 million was spent in 2019, and in 2020 there was \$10.6 million spent in importing

fish. You can see, Mr. Speaker, there is probably three times as much imported fish than we are catching locally. So, there is a great opportunity, Mr. Speaker, we believe, by creating and developing this shoreside Facility where our fishermen who want to come there, just drop off their products, and go back out to sea and fish, where it can be sold from the shoreside Facility.

But also, Mr. Speaker, as we spoke about was the longline. There is a significant opportunity for our fishermen to get involved in that. When we talk about \$14.6 million spent from overseas, you see, Mr. Speaker, there is a great opportunity.

So, Mr. Speaker, from that issue—just Shoreside Facility—to create a significant amount of economic activity where more individuals can be, I guess you can say trained in learning how to fish properly and then dropping off their products there at the Shoreside Facility, there is opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me just touch next on medical tourism. Mr. Speaker, the medical tourism piece that is in the economy recovery states “Work with the private sector” (and I emphasise) “work with the private sector to construct a medical tourism facility to create jobs and year-round visitors to Bermuda.”

Mr. Speaker, after many years of discussing the opportunity of medical tourism in Bermuda, we believe that we have a pathway to get there. The Honourable Zane DeSilva, who was the Minister of Health, I believe, in 2011, and who is also a great supporter of medical tourism, when speaking at the KPMG Infrastructure Summit in 2010 said that medical tourism could become a major part of Bermuda's revenue.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that KEMH for a short while had introduced medical tourism, particularly to do with prostate treatment. At that time, Mr. Speaker, actual treatment, people were flying in at KEMH and getting treatment done. And if you will recall, at the time, many of our citizens were complaining of the beds that were being taken up.

Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that when I was the Minister of Tourism and Economic Development in 2011, we started to look at the opportunity. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we were not able to continue to do that due to the election which was called in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, looking at this opportunity was picked up again in 2013 by the late Shawn Crockwell. And I quote what he said, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Crockwell reported to this Honourable House after he and the Minister of Health visited the Royal Medical Tourism and Global Congress. He said, ² “[M]edical tourism worldwide generated approximately \$50 billion in revenue.” He then went on to say that “[Medical tourism] is clearly an industry that Bermuda should explore.”

² *Official Hansard Report*, 11 November 2013, page 168

Mr. Speaker, this Government agrees with what the Honourable Zane DeSilva said at the time and we also agree with what the former Minister, the late Shawn Crockwell, said.

Mr. Speaker, since 2019 we have been working quietly with a team doing our due diligence and getting the work done in regard to looking at medical tourism. Mr. Speaker, that team consists of [the] Bermuda Tourism Authority; BDA (Bermuda Development Agency); BEDC (Bermuda Economic Development Corporation); KEMH; Department Secretary to the Cabinet Office, the Honourable Crystal Caesar; the Honourable Zane DeSilva; the Honourable Ianthia Wade; and the Honourable Minister Tinee Furbert.

Mr. Speaker, why do I believe that medical tourism will work and will benefit Bermuda? I do not know about many of my colleagues, but I just do not go to Florida to go to Florida. I go to Florida because at the end of the day there is something there that attracts me to bring my children and also my grandchildren. And that is called Disney World. I do not go to Arizona. I happen to go over there to Las Vegas. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that there are sometimes people go to countries not because of the country but because of what they can find in the country—Disney World, casinos, Broadway in New York—and the list can go on and on.

Mr. Speaker, it is our view that by putting an attraction—I use the word “attraction”—people will come to Bermuda. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the average tourism numbers in our hotels is roughly about 65 per cent and it has been like that for years. Mr. Speaker, we need something that is going to do more than what—as far as marketing is concerned—but it is going to cause them to go to Bermuda for one reason or the other.

Mr. Speaker, we have been looking at the medical tourism, as I said, from 2019 and the three things that I think that we believe that will attract people in regard to medical tourism, the largest revenue operation has to do with cosmetic surgery, that is a \$22.4 billion industry; dental surgery is a \$14.6 billion industry; orthopaedic surgery is a \$2.4 billion revenue within the world. Cosmetic surgery, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, attracts 6.4 million people, approximately, who go out for medical treatment, dentistry about 4.9 [million], and orthopaedics about 1 million. So, these are the three major driving operations that cause people to take a look at.

And so, we have been looking at this and having discussions on these procedures taking place in Bermuda, not for Bermudians, Mr. Speaker, I emphasise that. We do not want people to say, *I'm going to get some orthopaedic surgery done*, because they want to leave KEMH and come up to a medical treatment. No. The facility is for driving tourists from our key areas, such as Canada, United States and the UK.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that there are 1.4 million people just on the Eastern Seaboard that travel for medical tourism; approximately 217,000 people from Canada; 144,000 people from the United Kingdom are gateways that you just jump on the plane from Atlanta or from New York, or from I guess it is North Carolina now or Boston, and be in Bermuda in two hours and having your procedure and they will be able to enjoy the weather that we have. One of the things they tell me is what is because Bermuda's humidity is not as high as other jurisdictions as far as operations over 12 months is exceeding.

We have been told by key experts, Mr. Speaker, that all we need to do is attract 2 per cent—2 per cent—of the targeted market that would drive our medical tourism. Mr. Speaker, that is phenomenal. So, we will continue to work with stakeholders. We as a team will continue having discussions to move this forward and then, eventually, Cabinet will make a decision. But we believe that medical tourism, Mr. Speaker, and I will give you some data on that, from what we have been primarily looking at. It could create approximately 300 jobs in the industry.

Approximately 300 jobs are in the industry because there will be a medical centre, and an addition as far as a hotel. Now, the hotel is not going to be a St. Regis, it will not be a Ritz-Carlton. It will be a facility. But it will not be a Motel 6 either, Mr. Speaker. But it will be a nice hotel where people go to [convalesce] themselves. Then, eventually, as you know, these people traveling for medical tourism, can stay for a period of time and then move also to other areas, other hotels throughout Bermuda for a longer stay. So we see that the opportunities in that regard are significant. Mr. Speaker, we understand that the contribution to GDP would be, as I said, significant.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is running out. Let me speak to vertical farming and food cooperatives. We state in the plan, Mr. Speaker, that economic recovery speaks to creating a food cooperative, such as vertical farming and aquaponics to boost domestic food production. One of the first projects will be a large-scale vertical farming facility, partially powered by renewable energy that will produce annual leafy vegetables.

Mr. Speaker, let me first speak about the cooperative and where we are in regard to cooperative farmers. The farming industry, Mr. Speaker, falls under the Deputy. But what we are looking at is from a business perspective, hence why BEDC and myself are looking at that role. So BEDC is focused within this multi-faceted project to leverage the potential for forming a cooperative, or multiple cooperatives, as a way to assist current and new farmers in the agriculture industry, which will reduce their overhead and operating costs, share infrastructure and services so that they become more profitable, and ultimately boost local food production through better and more innovative business practices.

Mr. Speaker, the potential cooperatives for Bermuda's agricultural industry can be formed beyond just food. Consumer cooperatives can range from marketing cooperatives and supply/purchase cooperatives, service cooperatives and bargaining cooperatives which in form can all produce a reduced operating cost for farmers. Marketing cooperatives assemble parts, process and sell members' products in both domestic and foreign markets. The level of service provider depends on members' needs and the product. Supply cooperatives purchase products and services for the members, make large-scale purchases of fuel, seed, fertilizer and crop protectants and pass their cost-savings on to their members. A service cooperative provides members with specialised services such as grinding, hauling and agriculture advice which usually are not economical for an individual farmer to operate by themselves or to obtain.

And bargaining cooperatives bargain or negotiate with processors and other first handlers for better prices in terms of trade for their produce . . . as you know, Mr. Speaker, the more [members] you have then you can bargain and get better prices.

So the BEDC is currently in the early stages of researching the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within Bermuda's current farmer community. [They are] partnering with the Department of [Environment] and Natural Resources to hear first-hand from large and small farmers. Working this project will access farmers' interest [in] cooperatives while developing policies, financial products, agricultural incentives, and concessions for the industry which will ultimately assist with reducing operating costs and increasing food production and supply to local consumers with more local-grown food or more affordable prices.

Our meetings with the Bermuda Farmers Association and then the Board of Agriculture will commence next week on June 10th. It is anticipated that a policy of agricultural cooperatives can be established by the end of July. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been very helpful in providing an overview of this industry, of the current agriculture strategy, insight and support they currently provide the opportunities based on their first-hand oversight of the industry.

So this is working well and we believe that if we can get these working with the farmers, we can create a valid business plan so they can grow their crops which will also allow them to be more profitable. So this is also part of the Economic Plan going forward.

Mr. Speaker, we mentioned earlier about vertical farming. All Members are aware—I think it was last October or November that I made a statement about vertical farming when—

The Speaker: Just to let you be aware, you have two minutes left.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Oh my gracious, Mr. Speaker!

The Speaker: You started at 3:37 and it is now 4:05.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Two minutes?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Wow!

So vertical farming right now, local farmers produce only 20 [per cent] to 25 per cent of leafy greens. The vertical farming hopes to pick up the balance of that. Which would lower food costs, self-efficiency, due diligence, blah, blah, blah. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also are looking to reduce food costs. [Currently] Financial Assistance sends [approximately] \$6 million a year to some of the grocery stores that we have. And so we will be working with the BEDC to form a co-op business for small businesses to see how we can make this work better.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more time to explain [this because] there is a lot more detail. I believe that the plan that we have laid out for medical tourism, vertical farming to lower the cost for food, and also for the Shoreside Facility will boost significantly, Mr. Speaker, economic recovery for this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have your 60 minutes, if you wish. You have your time now.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As was said by the Minister of Finance, Bermuda, like many other countries around the world, was struck by the catastrophic impact of COVID-19 back in March of 2020. We recognise that this is an unusual event and pandemics normally come once every 100 years. It is like a black swan event. Not many countries around the world were prepared for it. Lives were lost. Communities were shattered. Our health care systems were stretched to their limits. Bermuda did well last year in containing the virus. But at the end of last year we were challenged and we had a spike.

As was also said, on the economic side there were many society disruptions and they were grave. We saw many family members lose their jobs, work part time at reduced salaries and reduced hours and, as a consequence, their families were stretched economically. We saw businesses that had been around for hundreds of years go under because the retail

business shrank as a result of the virus and unemployment.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that for any economy to take off it requires a healthy population. Currently, Mr. Speaker, this country, again, has done a fairly respectful job in addressing our COVID-19 situation. And our numbers at this point in time look very, very positive which positions us to begin our economic re-birth, our economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: This economic recovery, the recovery listed in the plan provided by the Government, is noble. But somewhere in that plan, Mr. Speaker, there should be an accommodation for a potential spike, because if we have another spike, Mr. Speaker, maybe six months from now, we will find ourselves with economic challenges and a possible shutdown again of our economy. I respect that the Government is, in essence, looking at new initiatives: the FinTech industry, the medical tourism industry, the banking industry, the green energy industry, and I cannot fault them in looking for new opportunities.

But in their marketing, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage them to do some stress testing so that we can have a model or a plan going forward that addresses another potential spike in the COVID-19.

I am saying that because we have to be realistic. This pandemic is cyclical. There are variants that come about which evolve and have an impact on most economies globally. We have seen it. We have followed the history. If you follow what has happened overseas in India, in the US, in the UK, when the numbers go bad the economy goes bad. So, I think the cornerstone to the success of our economic re-birth has to be the mitigation and handling of any outbreak of a COVID-19-type virus. To me, that should be the top priority when it comes to our economic re-birth and our economic priority, because without a sound management programme for COVID-19, we will be dramatically compromised when it comes to our business initiatives.

As I said, I was surprised to see that there was no possible stress testing or possible consideration for a fourth spike in the plan, and how that would impact the presentation and the Government's economic recovery initiatives. I believe that we need to diversify our economy, Mr. Speaker, and that we need an economy where we must . . . where one can support economic growth where jobs are created with the focus on equity, diversity, fair trade, and real opportunities for Bermudians. We must also find investors to support small businesses and our local economy. And we also must come to grips with the fact that all Bermudians must begin to do more to buy locally. Mr. Speaker, buying locally helps our economy. It ensures that there is more circulation of funds in our economy which will be the engine to drive our economic success.

Mr. Speaker, our resilience is based on that. Our resilience is based on keeping money in this

country. And so it is important that we provide proper fiscal management even at the Government level, and we must do more to ensure that funds are kept in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister touched on the debt of possibly \$3.3 billion. Again, annually we pay approximately \$127 million a year on interest payments. And I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that of that \$127 million paid annually in interest payments, which is bigger and larger than most ministries within government, 95 per cent of that money leaves this country. If we are able to manage our debts—and the Minister said he was trying to balance the budget by 2023—then surely we should be able to begin to gnaw away at the debt levels that we have and thereby reduce our interest payment commitments overseas.

If we reduce our interest payment commitments overseas by even \$50 million, or \$25 million annually, that will go a long way in helping our retail sector, our grocery store sector, our restaurant sector [and] our service industry, because that money will remain in Bermuda and circulate so that we can have a more robust economy and also have an economy that supports entrepreneurship and provides capital for small businesses, and more small businesses can thrive.

Mr. Speaker, generally, I would have liked to have seen more details in this plan. The Minister touched on a number of issues from a macro point of view; industries that he intended to explore and develop. And I understand issues from a macro point of view. But I was thinking that maybe we should be more granular and tell how the people of Bermuda will benefit from these new industries. What types of jobs will be created with each of the new industries presented? How many Bermudians will be available to enjoy positions in these new industries?

What will the growth pattern look like in these industries? Where is the data that will support the success of these industries, Mr. Speaker? Where is the data that will give the average man on the street—not the financial people, not the Minister, but the average man on the street—to give them information that will make them feel encouraged and feel that they have a positive future going forward?

I would invite the Minister to provide the average man with a vision, a vision that will show that they have a crucial role to play in the economic growth and that they will benefit by taking and filling various positions in the new economy going forward.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, going forward, at the end of the day, we cannot continue to borrow our way out of crisis. We must do more to ensure that this jurisdiction is a jurisdiction which invites capital, which invites people to invest in Bermuda, to bring their businesses to Bermuda because they know that we are an efficient operation, that we will roll out the red carpet for them, that we will help them provide a re-

turn on their capital in exchange for employing Bermudians.

I take the view that nationally we should have a prospectus on Bermuda, a glossy prospectus on Bermuda, [which] we can present to international investors, global investors who are always looking for opportunities to park their money, especially during this global low interest rate environment. So if we are able to produce a professional prospectus, a deck sheet that will show global investors that Bermuda is the place, then I think that we will be one step forward in the right direction. I know that we have the Tourism Authority out there selling our country from the tourism point of view, and the BDA providing their services in how to do business in Bermuda, and other services that they provide for business people who come here.

Mr. Speaker, we also spoke about immigration. Again, immigration is the key because if we follow economics globally, we will know that a successful country is only successful because of the human capital and the human resources that they have available in those countries. Most large economies are successful because they have a great reserve of human capital. Bermuda does not have that luxury. And as a consequence, we have to invite guest workers to our shores to fill the void.

Going forward I would seek more in this plan in regard to analytics on what is supporting the immigration policies when it comes to the relaxation of some of our immigration protocols that will enable us to share with the people of Bermuda, *Listen, these are the jobs. If we want our economy to grow, we need more people. We do not have enough people here and this is the information and this is how we think it will benefit you and the economy.* Just more transparency, show the picture, show the gaps. What gaps in human capital do we have in this economic recovery? If we do not have enough human capital, then the economic recovery will not take place.

So, Mr. Speaker, those types of blueprints I think should be made public to the people of Bermuda so that we are all in this together and that we can support our immigration initiatives and expand our economy.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the global economy, the IMF [International Monetary Fund] indicated that in 2021 the projected global growth (and this is from after the pandemic) is about 5.2 per cent, that is the global GDP growth. If I remember correctly, Bermuda's projected GDP growth is 2.5 per cent. So we have a ways to go to be on the same plane as the average global growth rate. And I take the view that the Government's recovery plan is the first step, but there is more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to recognise that we as a country need to do more with the US when it comes to tourism and capital. Because at the end of the day, what the COVID-19 pandemic has done in the US is basically encourage people to spend less,

increase their savings by trillions of dollars and there is money ready to be invested. There is pent-up demand for investment opportunities.

There is pent-up demand for tourism. And if we are a safe environment for tourism and we are a safe environment for investments, and if we make investors feel welcome, if we are here to support their businesses, and encourage them to hire more Bermudians and use more local services, and not work remotely from the US or from England—and this is where I commend the Government on their investment certificate, that is a step in the right direction. But we need more of those individuals in this country and we have to do more to get our story out.

To me, once we have those items of industry here, all the others will follow. And so, Mr. Speaker, we as a country must show that we are really open for business and not continue with the historic protective measures that we have. We can ill afford it at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, as you will note, I mentioned in my Budget Debate there was the issue of the EU and tax harmonisation, and labelling us as a tax haven. More recently, we had the President of the United States in his address to the joint session of Congress, labelling Bermuda as a tax haven. And we were in his cross hairs. That does not help us. That does not encourage those titans of industry to come and invest in Bermuda. And so we need to do more to educate our friends to the west of us, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when I—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Then you might want to educate Vic Ball, too.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, as I said, when I read and heard the article, I took information that I had on Bermuda's contribution to the US economy. I took information that the Minister of Finance had in regard to tax transparency treaties and sent it to one or two Congress people (Democratic Congress people) in Washington [D.C.], and told them to make sure that your leader gets this information so that he is better informed. Because obviously in my mind, Mr. Speaker, he was not informed in regard to the role that Bermuda plays in the financial service industry and the impact that it has on the US Government from an insurance point of view [and] from a financial service point of view.

In addition, he did not understand what transpired in this country in regard to tax transparency, FATF treaties, the IGA treaties, the TIEAs. These are all transparency tax treaties. There is nothing to hide there. As a banker, we tell clients it is transparency, tax transparency. We are unjustly targeted as a tax haven and we have to do more to address this. If not, you will see that our international business will be comprised to a degree. And I am doing my best to work with the BDA and other international local agen-

cies and associations to help where I can to support the Minister and Government in getting out the message to counter the allegations that Bermuda is a tax haven.

Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, back in July I did a story myself on the steps that could be taken to address an economic recovery in Bermuda. We have started on this journey. Some of my recommendations, I will admit, have begun to [bear] fruit in regard to this Government. We had to look at the fiscal framework and balance the budget. And while balancing the budget, the issue that we need to address (and the Minister has not mentioned in his report) is the tax reform commission. The recommendations and actions and suggested actions could play an integral role in determining Bermuda's fiscal framework going forward. The Minister has indicated that he wishes to balance the budget by 2023. Again, what roadmap do we have to get there? Because if we balance the budget we can come to grips with the increasing debt that we have.

Another suggestion that we need to wrap our minds around is the issue of the infrastructure investment. I know that Minister Burch has outlined some of the infrastructure investments that he has made in this country and I support that initiative because no recovery will begin without the investment and improvement in our infrastructure. It will be one of the keys to our economic recovery.

As I said earlier, we need to address and foster trust and a real bond with our business community. We must continue to have an environment whereby the Government and the business community have respect for each other, not just "them" respecting "us" and "us" respecting "them," because in some cases—[and] I have learned this from my history in international business—the mutual respect is not always there. So I take the view that we have to do more to cultivate the mutual respect between the international business, local business, and Government. It is a partnership that will form the cornerstone of Bermuda's economic recovery.

A lot has been said about our planning and regulations. And regulations [INAUDIBLE]. We also provide economic support, i.e., the deployment of taxes and business support. You will note that I had a parliamentary question on that this morning and it was answered by the Minister. And based on what I am hearing, that support is still needed and I think the Minister responsible for economic development and support has to continue with that until these businesses get on their feet and are able to sustain themselves for a while, because we not out of the woods yet and this plan will take some time to come to fruition. And until then, they will need all the support that they can get.

Talking about support, just today at lunch time, I went to a function and a gentleman said to me, *I have been out of work and I just went back to work*

and I have only been paid and I have applied for support (this was for unemployment support) and I have only had two pay cheques. How am I supposed to live on that?

I said, *Sir, did you fill out all your forms to make sure that everything was right and that your bank accounts were all straight?*

He said, *Yes. And I go into post office and the banks every week to see that my money is in.*

And it is becoming increasingly more difficult because of the time it takes to process all these support mechanisms.

A lot has been said about the digital infrastructure. I think the digital infrastructure is going to be the way forward. And for it to succeed and for it to provide jobs to Bermudians there has to be an advanced training programme for most Bermudians, because right now most of the digital infrastructure, most of the digital business is occupied by expatriates. I am not saying all of them; I am saying most of them.

We have talked about digital gaming. Again, what does that mean? What does that look like? I spoke to one of the hotel developers and I said, *So, you are getting your licence, or you have applied for the licence, and you will have digital gaming.* So I said, *What does that mean? What does that look like? If I came into your casino and asked you, 'What does this digital gaming look like?' . . . they could not give me an answer.*

They said, *I don't know. I'm waiting for the answer.* I am waiting for the answer!

And the same thing applies to these digital banks. I understand that we have a number of digital banks knocking at our doors. How will they operate? Will they be regulated like any other bank? How are we going to address solvency issues? How are we going to address KYC issues? And let me declare my interest, Mr. Speaker. I am a banker. I will say this: I am not against competition in the banking industry. But what I am against is an industry that will cause reputational risk to Bermuda. I am sure the Minister of Finance is also in that category.

And so when we look at these applications for digital banks, again, what will they look like? I know some of the international banks in New York and London are beginning to tread down this road. And those larger markets are beginning, in essence, to provide an infrastructure that can regulate those types of banks. Are we there yet? I think, yes, the industry needs to be regulated. And is the industry working closely with the BMA to ensure that the regulations for the digital banks are world class and [will] protect consumers and [will] protect our reputation as a jurisdiction and [will] protect the investors?

The other opportunity that I see that this Government can entertain is promoting Bermuda's nature-based investments and preserving our natural capital. We can provide financial solutions and resources to support our marine economy, our blue economy and

other nature-based solutions. Again, this is part of the green initiative. But again, we can protect and find opportunities for the natural resources that we have in this country. We have spoken quite a bit, Mr. Speaker, about tourism and hospitality. The BDA is on its way. We met with them in the PAC [Public Accounts Committee] and we have an outline of some of their plans. Obviously they were restricted by the capital they lost because of COVID-19, but they have a plan they are working on and I am confident that they will be on track to bear results similar to those they have provided in the past.

Mr. Speaker, another opportunity that we in the Opposition think could be considered for this country is the arts and the creative sector. We have many Bermudians overseas in theatre, many Bermudians overseas in singing and entertainment, many Bermudians overseas in the jewellery business and design business. Many Bermudians overseas are in the art history, Sotheby's, the auction business, the galleries in London, the galleries in New York. If we make that industry more attractive for Bermudians, some of our young folks overseas will come back home because there will be a market for them and an industry for them to thrive and live on.

I think other opportunities [include] enhancing the senior care programmes that we have in this country. We, as you know, have an ageing population. And with this ageing population support is required. I know that I have an 89-year-old father and I have people who come to help him because he is by himself, he and my brother. But, Mr. Speaker, other people need similar support. I am finding many people my age or maybe five years younger are in the same situation. So what we need to do is provide support to caregivers so that families can take care of their loved ones at home instead of putting them in institutions.

I actually went to a doctor with a friend of mine who has a senior parent. The doctor said to my friend, *It's good that you can keep your parent at home because they fare much better at home around the family and it is healthier for them.* And so there is another opportunity that the Government can examine going forward to ensure that the unpaid caregivers are supported and recognised and somehow can be covered from a remuneration point of view.

The other issue that I think we need to address is the philanthropic areas. There are a lot of charities in this country. A lot of charities that have good causes: helping our young people, helping broken families, helping the environment, helping in the education, helping in career development, helping in family crisis centres. They play a vital role in sustaining a positive environment, a positive economic environment. And as a consequence, we need to do more as a Government to support the philanthropic sector within our community so that our economy operates with no one falling between the cracks because the

philanthropic sector can help provide the support that they may not be able to get or may not afford to get.

Another issue that I think we need to address is the unemployment of young people and providing them with support programmes that guarantee jobs. And I know that we do that in Workforce Development to a degree, but we need to have more mentorship programmes [and] work placement programmes. We need to help them in regard to the economy. A lot of young people are hustling. They may take two or three jobs to make it work, and sometimes that is by choice. And so we need to help them out. And I think a lot of them are not employed. They are contract workers. They are like the gig economy. And so we need to make sure that they are protected and that the gig economy for these young people moves forward. Because a number of our young people are more entrepreneurial than we ever were. They are risk-takers. So we have to provide them with the support like we would provide any other entrepreneurial industry that we have in this country.

The other issue is work-place changes and patterns. I think the Government and businesses should get together to look at the format of the work-place going forward. I think that the old work environment that we have had in the past has changed and will never be what it was before—working from home, flexitime, and good working security, support from a remote access. I know people who were sent home in March. They had a desktop at their work and at home and they were equipped to work from their office and at home, 24/7. And so then you have the issue of work-life balance. So, again, we need to look at legislation that will address employment and workplace changes that have resulted because of the change in work patterns that we find in this new COVID-19 environment.

Mr. Speaker, as for the report, generally, I have just a few final comments. A lot of people as a result of COVID-19, and to a lesser degree before COVID-19, have complained continuously about the cost of doing business and the cost of living in Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, you know that there was recent discussion in the media about the minimum wage and the cost-of-living wage. I think that is a very interesting discussion and a very interesting debate. But the issue needs to be addressed. I have a number of young people who are moving to England because they cannot afford to live in Bermuda. We have seniors who are saying, *Thank you. I have had a very good career in Bermuda. I am moving to the US . . . I am moving to Canada . . . I am moving to South America . . . I am moving to England because my money goes [further], and financially I can have a better quality of life.* And there goes the capital, [leaving Bermuda].

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to address the cost of living in this country—the cost of groceries, the cost of clothing, we need to address the cost of living. Because, again, without addressing the issue we will see

the flight of some of our Bermudians and some of our expatriate workers who are here.

The other issue I think we need to address, Mr. Speaker, is the entrepreneurship and the young businesspeople. You see a number of new industries popping up because of young entrepreneurs. I support them 100 per cent. I support their creativity. But most of them have indicated that they require so much capital to get into the business and once they are in the business, the costs are exorbitant. They struggle with the payroll taxes. They struggle with their health insurance. They struggle with the social insurance, and they struggle with access to capital.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time that Bermuda again makes itself more attractive to venture capitalists, or venture capital funds or private capital funds, because these are the investors who are looking for private investments to help businesses. I mean, I am looking at [the] Bank of Butterfield, when they had their challenges. They had a private equity firm come in, invest in it, turn around and out they went. Why can't we have something similar for our small businesses, for our young entrepreneurs, who need access to capital? That same structure could somehow be available to our young entrepreneurs so that they can help drive this engine for our recovery and also benefit economically.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are my main comments. As I said, I read the report. I looked at the so-called "guardrails." I have looked at the modelling that was presented in the report. I have looked at the projections that I understand, but I would encourage the Minister to repackage some of that information so that the man on the street can see himself participating in this economic rebirth, in this economic renaissance. Because if you gave that report to the average man on the street, I would go out on a limb and say that they will not understand it to the degree that we would like. And they will probably say, *Where do I fit in this rebirth? Because I cannot see myself fitting in.*

That is the challenge that we have. We are speaking at macro level, and if we want our economy and our people to come on board with us, we must speak their language. They must see a place for themselves in this economic renaissance. And if they see a place, they will work together and support our initiatives.

So, Mr. Speaker . . . oh, one more thing. I would just like to address a couple of comments made by the Minister of the Cabinet Office on medical tourism. This is an interesting phenomenon. I know this topic has been off and on the agenda for the past 20 years that I have been in the House of Assembly. We have one hospital. I know that the Cayman [Islands] has the hospital called Health City. It is a private hospital. And it is owned by Mr. Shetty. I think he owns that hospital. And so the model that the Government is using for medical tourism, and I am asking as a question, Will they just use our hospital where we

have capacity issues now? Or would it make sense to find an investor to look at the hospital and possibly have one . . . and if I remember correctly, there was a gentleman who was possibly interested in having a medical tourism place down at Southside for a hospital. Obviously it did not pan out. I think what we need to do if we are serious about having medical tourism, is partner with investors in that industry.

Go to where they are, go to the conferences, go to the symposiums where the investors are looking for the opportunities in medical tourism. I am not convinced (is the best word I can say) that medical tourism will work with our existing hospital because of the way it is structured and because of the capacity challenges that it currently faces. I have been to the hospital down in Cayman. And I will give you a taste as to what it looks like.

It is very institutionalised. They specialise in orthopaedics, cardiology, endocrinology, neurosurgery and a few others. All the doctors and surgeons that I met when I was there were from Southeast Asia—Indian, Sri Lankan—well-qualified individuals. They knew their stuff. They knew their business. Undeniably. Unquestionably. But there were not many locals working in that hospital.

I have been advised, and I was advised during the tour that procedures are much cheaper in their hospital than in most hospitals in Cayman or the US. And that is why they were attractive to a number of insurance companies and a number of individuals who can afford it. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, only 40 per cent of their patients are from overseas. Sixty per cent of their patients are from the Cayman Islands, and primarily are individuals of high net worth who live in the Cayman Islands. Because Cayman has that private hospital which is Health City and I think one or two other public hospitals.

So, again, if we are going to go down this route I would encourage the Government to look at possibly using a footprint that we already have and have the investor invest in a new infrastructure and leave our hospital as is because we currently have capacity problems sometimes at the hospital at the best of times.

And so, Mr. Speaker, on that note I would like to thank the Minister for his presentation and for allowing me the opportunity to make a contribution to this Motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Hayward.

Minister Hayward, how are you, sir? You have got your 30 minutes on the clock.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, we are here to discuss an important topic and that is Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan. I am thankful for you allowing me the time to have intervention in this debate today.

You would note that the plan has two distinct features. One is a fiscal plan. The second is initiatives that we need to implement as a Government to support our economic recovery initiatives and strategy. Mr. Speaker, what we are looking at here is having initiatives that support economic development that lead to economic growth, and initiatives that support economic growth that lead to economic development.

Now, economic growth and economic development are two distinct items. But one is looking at it from a very high level and seeing how there are induced and direct impacts on the economy and one is driving more from the development of the bottom up, which would also lead to expansion of our economy. And I think that is what this plan seeks to achieve. It seeks to look at this from both angles—the economic growth angle and economic development angle.

My role in this debate is to outline some of the initiatives that the Ministry of Labour is associated with as it pertains to the Economic Recovery Plan. The aim of the Ministry of Labour is to support economic growth and ultimately this will lead to the expansion of jobs.

We want to see an expansion of jobs. We want to see an expansion of opportunities. We want to see expansion of entrepreneurship. We want to see increased revenues to the Government. And all of this to support our local community. At the end of this plan what we should see is a better quality of life for the people who live, work and reside in Bermuda.

One major initiative that we have begun to implement is the Economic Investment Certificate. Mr. Speaker, this certificate requests a minimum investment of \$2.5 million into our economy. And this affords individuals the permission to reside in Bermuda indefinitely. It is good for Bermuda because it is designed to stimulate economic activity. If one invests \$2.5 million in Bermuda, it will have a direct benefit and then it would have indirect and induced benefits. It also will create an environment, depending on where the investment was made, for job creation. But it markets Bermuda as a place for individuals to reside and do business as well. It is one of those policies that allows immigration to harness its toolkit to directly support economic growth and directly support economic development.

Mr. Speaker, there are number of ways in which one can obtain a Residential Certificate. The most popular way at this time is through the acquisition of land. We also encourage investments directly into government facilities. We want to see investments

into our third sector and our charities. And then we would want to see persons who want to invest in business opportunities in Bermuda, and not just invest but expand business opportunities in Bermuda and the type of businesses that will open our economy. I would say that this programme is going extremely well.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that this week I was able to sign the first two Economic Investment Certificates. We saw over \$14 million invested in our economy. What was more encouraging about those investments was that when the dialogue happens between the Bermuda Development Agency and the prospective applicant, there were further commitments for further investments and there were conversations as to how these persons can further invest in Bermuda. And so the investments just do not dry up with the initial investment. These individuals will continue to contribute to our society, contribute to our economy and this is the desired outcome of the policy.

This is all around the framework of us having an understanding of how we support expansion of our residential population to drive more economic activity within our society. And another measure that we put in place is how we use flexible, temporary residency to inject a greater level of activity within our economy. And so another example, Mr. Speaker, is the one-year "Work from Bermuda Residential Certificate." Thus far we have had over 900 applications with well over 700 of those individuals being approved to live, work from and reside in Bermuda. These individuals contribute to daily life in Bermuda. They purchase from our stores. They purchase services that are provided in our economy. There are some individuals who have embarked on philanthropy within our economy. There are some individuals who have decided that they want Bermuda to be a more permanent location for themselves or their business and they are looking to start up businesses in Bermuda. They are looking to purchase property in Bermuda. But, more importantly, this particular policy was utilised to offset our declining population, number one. Number two, [to offset] the reduction in our tourism [numbers] over the last 18 months. This is what happens when we can positively use immigration policy to better serve the wider Bermuda.

We have also seen where persons have initially come and then they look to relocate their families here, and have their children participate in our schools, both public and private. And so what we see is a new injection of energy into our economy by harnessing our immigration policy. And it does provide economic return—the economic return we need to support our economic recovery. The economic return that we need to support the retention of jobs within our economy. And so it is clear this is an effective policy that is working and is a policy that we will continue with.

Mr. Speaker, we also made the decision to expand the amount of time our tourists can stay from 90 days to 180 days. We now see tourists requesting to stay in Bermuda on an annual basis. These persons are not afforded the opportunity to work in Bermuda, but certainly are afforded the opportunity to reside in Bermuda. And like the one-year "Work from Bermuda Residential Certificate" holders, these individuals also contribute to daily life in Bermuda. [They] also contribute to our economy. And this is what happens when we use immigration as a tool to better support economic growth and the expansion of jobs.

We want to see expansion of our residential population from other lands. But we also have to talk about retention of our current residential population. In the Speech from the Throne the Government committed to providing a framework for our long-term residents to secure some sort of residential permanency in Bermuda. And we are working towards trying to find an avenue where long-term residents can continue to live [and] contribute to our economy, but also find some level of security so that they can also invest further within our economy.

I have spoken with a number of persons who are holding off either on business start-ups or property or investment in our economy in other ways because they have not secured a level of permanency. And so if persons have demonstrated that they have contributed to Bermuda for a number of years we will be looking at measures as to how we can provide a framework for them to secure residential permanency. And it is not just focusing on that individual, but it is more or less how those persons can better support our economy which better supports our aim to have Bermudians enjoying a better quality of life, to have Bermudians having more opportunities as it pertains to jobs and things of that nature.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at labour market developments, we know that we have somewhat of an uphill battle. Since the health care crisis has translated into somewhat of an economic crisis, we have seen a contraction of jobs in the majority of our industrial sectors within our economy.

So Government embarked on a journey to put in place a reemployment and reintegration strategy. We have a strategic plan that talks about how we facilitate ease of providing education training and employment opportunities for unemployed Bermudians. It is our aim to have Bermudians equipped to transfer back into the workplace with some level of ease. But we know that we cannot do it alone. And so the previous people talk about how we need to harness the relationship between our business community and that is what we are doing.

From the standpoint of the Ministry of Labour, we are working directly with industry to support greater opportunities for Bermudians to return to the workplace. We already had a pool of persons on financial assistance. We see expansion of those persons who

actually are requiring that social protection. But it is not good enough to provide those persons with social protection. So what we have done is embark on a journey where every able-bodied person on financial assistance will have personal employment plans. We will work with those individuals to provide a suite of services that will get that person positioned to take advantage of job opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked with employment agencies. We have worked with large employers. We have partnered intra-ministry. We have partnered with other ministries to see how we can facilitate their level of on-the-job training, and also how we can provide services to persons who need a level of employment services to get back into the job market. We have also provided various specified training [in] hospitality management, business management, training in Allied Health professions, information technology, vocational training, and trades training. We recognise that this is required to get our people in a position to take advantage of opportunities that exist.

We have ongoing services provided to individuals because that is what is required to support economic recovery, human development, development of our human resources so that they can take advantage of the opportunities that exist within our economy.

You will note that the Ministry made the decision to close 41 additional job categories. That was directly designed to create opportunity for Bermudians to become gainfully employed in those occupational categories without the competition of foreign labour. And so it is important when we look at our initiatives that we do have that we do not look at these initiatives in isolation, but that we look at these initiatives under the framework of a business scheme and that is supporting our local population to take advantage of opportunities which support economic recovery so that the majority of the persons who are in Bermuda, at the end of the day, can enjoy a better quality of life. And so I encourage anybody who is unemployed to contact the Department of Workforce Development, submit your résumé, and take advantage of the training that is being provided.

Specifically, within that framework of the national employment strategy is a youth employment strategy. We had our first cohort of graduate training which provided skill set development centred around individuals developing their own personal and individual brand, training centred around emotional intelligence and the way in which those individuals communicate within the workplace, cultural awareness centred around diversity and inclusion, and office etiquette, the soft skills that are required to continue to remain on a job after you get into that workplace. But this is what is required. We need more on-the-job training opportunities and we have done a lot of sponsorship and we will continue to work with employers to have more on-the-job training opportunities available.

We are looking to the National Training Board to expand our apprenticeship programmes. Apprenticeship programmes allow persons to work in a desired occupation of choice and receive on-the-job training and also a higher level of education as it pertains to that occupational category. That is what we need. We need to ensure that we are investing in our young people so that our young people can take advantage of opportunities.

But then there are also some young persons who have already demonstrated they have a competency by obtaining some level of education but lack the experience. And that is partially why we are pushing more and more on the on-the-job training, to get these individuals exposed in their desired occupational groups so that employers can see the value that they can offer. And I am pleased to report that a number of graduates in our first cohort have been retained by employers after they were able to show the employers the value that they are able to contribute.

And so part of this plan is not just high level, macro level initiatives. These initiatives are directly designed to support persons on financial assistance, directly designed to support unemployed individuals, directly designed to support our young persons. And we have continued with scholarships, we have continued with our summer employment programmes and we will continue to work toward expanding our programme offerings in the second phase of our reemployment and reintegration strategy.

But while we are all working on people to get back into the job market, there is still a need to support persons who are locked out of the job market financially. And thus far this Government has spent over \$65 million in providing unemployment benefits and supplemental unemployment benefits directly to help those persons who have been displaced from the workforce. We have also increased the grant funding for financial assistance to support the additional families who are now on financial assistance.

We need a better short-term mechanism than the one we have, and the solution is a national unemployment insurance programme. We are doing work on ensuring that we have a fully funded and properly administered programme. We have reached out to the ILO [International Labour Organization] and the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre to see if they can provide technical support to the Government of Bermuda. It is our aim to ensure that we have an unemployment insurance programme in place so that there is an automatic social protection in place for persons when they become displaced from the workforce. In the meantime, we will continue to support persons through financial assistance, through the supplemental unemployment benefit and through the employment benefits that we offer.

We recognise the importance of these social protections because social protections ensure that persons do not slip further into poverty or too far into a

position that they cannot recover from. And so it is about us playing our part as a Government and as a society to support those who need that particular assistance. Many Bermudians, and also our guest workers, have benefitted from the social protections we have put in place. When we hear people saying that we are not doing anything for Bermudians on the ground, that is one programme that we can stand boldly behind and say, *We have provided the necessary social protections*. And, yes, there are stories where people can highlight where payments have been late; there are \$65 million [worth] of other stories that can be told where these interventions were provided at a critical time to support our population when they were in need. And that is part of our recovery plan, ensuring that we continue to support social protections moving forward.

Another critical part is that when they get into the workplace we remove the ability for employers to pay poverty wages to these individuals. And so, yes, we are working on a minimum living wage regime. I am pleased that the Wage Commission was able to provide the first report on the minimum wage as prescribed by the Wage Commission Act. They are to provide a second report. I know that the Wage Commission did say it may be a year [in coming]. I am going to ask that this report be submitted within the next six months because we want to ensure that persons are making dignified wages and persons can sustain a decent quality of life through employment in Bermuda.

This is not political posturing. This is not pontification. We want to promote fair compensation for employees; that is our desire. We want to improve people's quality of life; that is our desire. We want to prevent further exploitation of workers; that is our desire. We want to prevent working families from being below the poverty line. This is us providing a safety net through employment for persons so that when we do get to a place of economic prosperity, they can enjoy a quality of life similar to other citizens within this country.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at it through the lens of what the Ministry of Labour is actually doing, we want to reform our financial assistance system as well and we are doing specific work toward that particular [goal]. This is directly to help the people of Bermuda who need the most assistance during this time. While we talk about the things we do, we have a three-pillar reform of immigration strategy: 1) ensure that we provide protections to Bermudians; 2) ensure that we have retention of our current residential population; and 3) seek ways to see how we can expand our residential population.

And moving forward we will see a number of policy measures that are in alignment with those three pillars.

When we talk about one pillar in isolation, persons say, *Well, what are you doing to support Bermudians?* So it should be noted that the first pillar

is to ensure that there is a protection of opportunities for Bermudians underneath our strategy. But in future statements I will elaborate further in terms of the items that fall under the umbrella of immigration reform. So perhaps persons can be more confident in supporting these initiatives that we need to implement to boost our economy, to support economic recovery, to support economic growth that supports economic development, and economic development that supports economic growth, to support the expansion of jobs, to support the expansion of opportunities, to support the expansion of entrepreneurship to increase government revenue so that Bermudians can enjoy a better quality of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this brief intervention into today's debate.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I would like to make a contribution if that is okay with you.

The Speaker: Yes. It sounds like Minister Scott.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Minister Scott, you have your 30 minutes.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as though you are from Somerset, God's country—

The Speaker: Yes, no dispute there.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I believe that you probably know the Bible better than anyone else I know.

The Speaker: Well—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Well, maybe not. Maybe the Deputy Speaker, who may or may not have an autographed copy—

[Laughter]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: But I digress.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: But, Mr. Speaker, for those who may not be as familiar with the Good Book as us, Genesis chapter 1 speaks to the seven days in which everything was created amongst the heavens and earth. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not actually want to speak about all seven days, because I only have 30 minutes, I just want to focus on the first three days.

You see, the first day light was created. The second day the sky was created. And on the third day dry land, seas, plants and trees were created. And so, Mr. Speaker, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word "environment" as the *surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal or plant lives or operates*. So one could say that God created the environment we live in in the first three days.

Mr. Speaker, my reason for drilling down on the creation story is because governments are responsible for creating environments as well. Now, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. I am not in any way comparing or contrasting government to God. But what I am doing is illustrating how Herculean of a task the creation of an environment, the surroundings, the conditions of which one lives and operates in is. So, Mr. Speaker, actually, anyone can create an environment but to create an environment in which residents can thrive, where one can be successful or, at the very least, provide the majority with equal opportunity in which to be successful, that is difficult. That takes skill. That takes integrity and that takes time.

And it is the intricacies needed that will ensure that the goal is achieved. That is the true test of a government. Mr. Speaker, unlike the creation story, there is no one person, no one entity that is responsible for the creation of such an environment. It takes a team of individuals, all focused on the same goal, and leveraging, wielding their individual God-given talents.

So, Mr. Speaker, on this road to economic recovery, the Ministry of Transport is focused on working toward the creation of an environment that promotes and assists the country's economic recovery via land, sea and air.

So, Mr. Speaker, being that the sky was formed on the first day, and on day two of the creation story, let's stop there, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about air and transport, I cannot help but talk about our air service development strategy, our new routes. As I said earlier today, the first new flight from the Azores begins next week. We continue to explore opportunities in the Caribbean and the Far East. Because remember, the Ministry has a mantra, has a focus, has a goal of serving the underserved in our community. And while speaking about our community, we are using the various nationalities that reside on Island to determine which new non-stop routes, which new non-stop destinations to explore.

We have already created the Azores Airlines non-stop flight to Azores which helps keep our Portuguese nationals in contact with friends [and] family from their country. We are currently working on the

Caribbean as we have a very large Caribbean-based population. And next on our list, [also] very advantageous, will be to help facilitate non-stop service or routes that will help make traveling for our Indian and Filipino nationals a lot easier.

And now, Mr. Speaker, air routes are not just an opportunity for tourism, but also for entrepreneurs and small business owners, because it opens them up not just to new destinations, but to new markets. It allows for our entrepreneurs to go and scout ahead. This is why the Ministry is letting you know where we are going and why we are going there because it allows you go and scout ahead so that you can look, because every country that we are servicing, that we will have new routes to, is a manufacturing country. They manufacture products there so therefore our small businesses and entrepreneurs can go and look to see if they can become representatives of those manufacturers of those products, goods and services here on Island.

So, Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurs and owners will be able to create supply chains. Because do not think we are going to stop at the air routes. We are going to then, after the air routes get established, we will be establishing shipping routes. That is the way the supply chain gets created. That is where they are able to find new customers in a larger and more diverse marketplace for goods and services.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that air visitors spend more than cruise visitors. And for some time our cruise visitors have outpaced that of air visitors and we have created an environment—and I am saying “we” meaning this administration, this current Ministry of Transport team has created an environment in which we can restore more of a balance, and that is done through homeporting. And now that we are on to homeporting, that brings us to day three of the creation story, Mr. Speaker.

And for those who do not follow the Good Book, on day three the ocean and dry land were created. And so, Mr. Speaker, with homeporting, when it was first announced, I read the comments. Normally I do not, but I read the comments in the *Royal Gazette*. I read the comments in *Bernews*. And there were persons in the community who left comments under the article and some of them said things like, *Pie in the sky. Never going to happen. I will believe it when I see it.* And for those persons who left those comments, those who will believe it when they see it, I encourage you to take a drive down Harbour Road. I encourage you to take a drive along Front Street. I encourage you to take a drive along Burnaby Hill, and take a look to your left when you are on Front Street. Take a look to your right when you are on Harbour Road, and you will see a homeporting cruise ship sitting in Hamilton Harbour—a ship that has already gone to Dockyard and put on four tons of fuel, put on food and provisions, already spending money, already providing

economic impact and infusing money into our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the homeporting initiative is projected to generate \$20 million in economic impact. It will create and has created approximately 60 new part-time jobs. And on June 15th when it does its first revenue booking, or revenue cruise, it will have touched directly and indirectly every sector of our hospitality and transportation industry and provided benefits for hotels, from guests who are doing pre- and post-stays, to the entrepreneurs and the small business owners who are going to be impacted and see benefits through the short excursions and services that are provided and subscribed to. And let us not forget our public service vehicles, Mr. Speaker: our taxis, minibuses and limos.

Speaking of public service vehicles, and in relation to the creation story, that brings us to the land aspect, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry will soon embark on the creation of a public service vehicle environment which encourages and supports owners and operators to be financially successful while simultaneously providing a better quality of service for customers. And this will be done by removing certain restrictions, removing certain obstacles and barriers to entry into this industry, which is one that is most lucrative and is unofficially valued at \$60 million.

This environment should lend itself to promoting persons whom we consider entrepreneurs and having them promoted to small [sized] business owners. Those who are currently small [sized] business owners, through the success of this new environment that they will be operating in, should be able to transition to become medium [sized] business owners. And Mr. Speaker, that should help create a nation of owners. For far too long we have relied on outside entities. We have relied on outside forces to allow us to be successful, to give us a chance. No, that stops now! That stops here!

This Economic Recovery Plan is allowing Bermudians, small [sized] business owners, [and] entrepreneurs to be a nation of owners, to create and forge their own destiny, to be their own boss, and to enjoy their own successes.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that has been holding us back has been the framework of our transportation system. Mr. Speaker, the framework of our transportation system was founded back in 1951. In 1951, Mr. Speaker, my father was 11 years old. And a new car cost \$1,500. We are relying on the foundation or the framework that was put in back then to operate a modern transportation system now, and that is not sufficient. And that is why part of the Economic Recovery Plan has a modernisation [plan] when it comes to the Ministry of Transport. It has us modernising transportation through digital fare media which will allow for real-time ridership data. That real-time ridership data will allow us to have a more effective, more efficient, more consistent bus service.

And while we are talking about bus service, we will now be transitioning from the old diesel buses to new electric buses. And at no time will any of the current DPT [Department of Transportation] workers be made redundant, and at no time have we reduced our training budget. We are going to train and skill our people to be able to operate in a modern transportation society, in this modern environment that we are going to be creating. And the customer will be able to enjoy Wi-Fi on the buses and on the ferries.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what about those persons who are differently abled and cannot go down or up a hill, do not have the ability to wait at a bus stop? We have not forgotten about them either. This environment is inclusive of them as well. We will be creating a paratransit system, which means we will be creating a template, an environment in where those who are differently abled will still be able to have access to public service, which will be more of an on-demand service than anything. And so, therefore, this is going to once again create more jobs, increase the quality of life for persons within this community, persons who reside within these shores.

But, Mr. Speaker, although I am the one that might be the face, I might be the one that you hear most of all when we talk about transportation and the Ministry of Transport, it is not just me, the Minister, responsible for the creation of this environment. I am supported by multiple teams and hundreds of individuals. But I would be remiss if I did not mention those whom I work closest with who have been most instrumental in bringing these initiatives to fruition. Mr. Speaker, I am speaking of none other than Jasmin Smith, Theresa Ince, Terry Spencer, Roger Todd, Stacey Evans, Rudy Cann, Neville Tyrrell, Michael Weeks, Lovitta Foggo, Dennis Lister III, and Curtis Richardson.

Mr. Speaker, these are the individuals who share the same passion for transportation and moving our country forward as I do. And Mr. Speaker, they do a very good job (so that I don't get caught in using unparliamentary language). They do a phenomenal job of keeping me, I would say, on the rails, because I can get a little excitable from time to time. And so, Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss if I did not share their names to make sure that when you see this new environment in transportation coming to fruition . . . and Mr. Speaker, this plan, this Economic Recovery Plan was debuted in March. We are 90 days in and we are already showing signs. We already have a cruise ship in our harbour. We already have new flights landing on our runways. So imagine what we can do over the next four to five years! Imagine where we will be, Mr. Speaker.

So in closing, what I will tell the public and those who are listening in, especially my entrepreneurs and small [sized] business owners: Get ready! Make sure you have everything in place to take part in Bermuda's business economic recovery over these

next five years. We do not want you to get left behind. This is a renaissance, of sorts. This is a time when the "haves" can continue to have, but the "have-nots" need to have more. And we are creating an environment so that everyone can have more, so that everybody has the same access and opportunity to be successful as anybody else. And you do not have to rely on anybody else in order to be successful.

A lot of the restrictions that we have seen over the last decade we are looking to responsibly remove. And as I said before, as you can see, this is not just talk. As the Member who took the floor before me, Minister Jason Hayward says, *We are not just talking. We have already put action behind it.* And Mr. Speaker, we just need everybody—small businesses, medium businesses, entrepreneurs and the like—to take destiny into their own hands, participate in our economy, be a mover and a shaker in our economy. Look within to see what makes you tick. What are you passionate about? Figure out a way in which to make a living from it so that you will not have to work a day in your life.

This is where we are. And in five years we will have a balanced budget, we will have a nation of owners, and we will have a majority of this country enjoying the quality of life that they do not just wish, they do not just deserve, but the quality of life that they have always wanted and dreamed of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Well said!

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister Scott.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

No other Member?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will speak.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Okay, Deputy Premier, you have the floor. You have your 30 minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to have given space so a Member of the Opposition could contribute to this very important debate, but as that is not the case I will myself give my submission.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak on this very important debate around the Government's Economic Recovery Plan. I am very pleased that the Finance Minister tabled the Motion so that we can talk to the people, talk to the House, talk to the community about what plans we have going forward, Mr. Speaker.

This debate was preceded by submissions from two very Honourable Ministers, the Minister for the Cabinet Office who has outlined a number of very interesting initiatives, which I am sure he will talk more about in the coming weeks and months as they evolve and formulate. And also Minister Hayward who has himself, while he has been Minister of Labour, piloted a number of initiatives that have contributed to worthwhile opportunities for people to come to Bermuda and work from Bermuda, but also he has drilled down on how we are going to shape the job recovery of our own people here in Bermuda, which is a crucially important component of the recovery.

There is no doubt that the recovery of the job sector in every key sector of this country, tourism and other related service sectors, [in which] Bermudians have been predominantly involved in have been, unfortunately, ravaged to some degree by the COVID-19 experience. And certainly when it comes to our working population, the Minister of Labour has given that his ultimate focus and he gave a very clear submission around his initiative and what he is doing and his firm commitment to that.

Mr. Speaker, my area of Home Affairs is multi-faceted and has a number of areas. I am very proud to have responsibility for a number of initiatives, at least five or so initiatives within the Economic Recovery Plan that will be the focus of my Ministry going forward. We are focused on a number of things around the [Bermuda] National Space Strategy, around the telecommunications sector, the energy sector and also the marine sector and channelling the effort and also the opportunities that we need to shape to take advantage of economic recovery initiatives in these key sectors.

I will start first by listing some of the key areas that we are focusing on, Mr. Speaker. The [Bermuda] National Space Strategy. There are opportunities in the growing international global space economy that Bermuda can take advantage of. And if you can allow me, Mr. Speaker, [I would like] to read a particular point that I have gleaned from my own continuous research and information that is out there from the likes of Harvard University, Morgan Stanley and other major players in the global and academic community.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister. You can read it.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Right now, in 2019, the estimated value of the global space industry was \$300-plus million [*sic*]. And that is still the case now in that

the estimated revenue generation in the global space industry . . . I'm sorry. [It is] \$366 billion! Sorry! I misquoted; I downed the number. Billion dollars, Mr. Speaker! Nearly \$400 billion of revenue generation associated with the space industry. That is predicted to get to . . . by 2040 to be in the trillions.

There are some key areas of focus in the space industry which are growing and developing, key areas such as telecommunications, such as Internet infrastructure. And these are areas that are of particular importance to Bermuda because we play a very important role (and I will speak more about that later) in the area of global telecommunications. We have at least three or four—three major subsea cables that transit through Bermuda that go from different parts of the world: South America, Europe, and North America. So Bermuda already plays a crucial role in that.

What is happening in the satellite industry and the global space industry is going to augment that because there is a demand for the expansion of broadband. There is an expanding need for telecommunications services. There is expanding need, Mr. Speaker, for what is referred to as space-to-us services, services where the monitoring of the planet is becoming crucial for the generation of data that is helping to manage different aspects of the global community. Our National Space Strategy is built around taking advantage of those opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

But I will just move on from that because we have the subsea cable opportunities [and] the National Space Strategy. We also are working on the crucial area of energy and developing opportunities that are in play that can aid in our efforts to diversify our energy sector which actually will contribute to inward investment and growth in that sector.

One thing that needs to be understood about the energy sector, Mr. Speaker, is that renewable energy is where the growth is. That is where it is growing. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: Producing energy and generation through fossil fuel generation, is the most expensive way to create power right now. And that is a global fact. Right now renewable energy per kilowatt hour is either on par [or] in some cases cheaper to produce than [fossil fuel] energy. It is cheaper and a more worthwhile investment to invest in clean generation than it is to invest in fossil fuel generation.

All investment is highly capitalised, but the reality is that when the data is looked at, it is cheaper now to be investing in green energy. That is the direction Bermuda is going. It is also going to be much more worthwhile and sustainable for Bermuda to invest in green energy, to move away from fossil fuel generation. That is how we are going to bring down the cost of energy and ultimately impact the cost of living. So we are focusing on the energy sector as an area of growth and opportunity for highly capitalised investment, job growth, and also high-skilled job growth and economic opportunity for Bermuda.

We are also looking at the ocean around us, Mr. Speaker, as a place where there is opportunity for growth and there is opportunity for investment. Right now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our space strategy we are working with the Bermuda Business Development Agency and the Regulatory Authority and we are focusing on a number of strategies that would include the selling of Spectrum for low-level satellite operations, and we are also working on developing a satellite registry service, as well as attracting companies here in the areas of risk and also other activities that will attract high-value jobs in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the area of space, Bermuda has a long history, with NASA, in particular. And NASA is a very positive partner with Bermuda, not only with the fact that they are here monitoring space activity to the moon, around the earth, to Mars and beyond, but that relationship has also sprung opportunities that we have with developing relationships with the likes of SpaceX, with Blue Origin, and even Virgin Galactic who are all new players in the space industry, and others who are launching satellites. The issue of earth monitoring and earth observation is one of the growing sectors of space. And we have opportunities there because of Bermuda's long legacy in space, our global proximity, and also [because] the commercial side of space is growing. Like I said before, [it is] \$400 billion now, a trillion dollars in the not-too-distant future. So Bermuda has opportunities there that we can take advantage of.

Linking that to subsea cables, Mr. Speaker, we have developed a framework through passing legislation last year around subsea cables, we are now creating an opportunity for Bermuda to not only (as I have already spoken about) expand our space-related commercial opportunities but that is intricately linked to what is happening on the ocean floor with the expansion of transatlantic cables.

There are definitely already major possibilities being observed there. We actually have a number of companies that have already been approaching the Government about landing cables in Bermuda. In particular, Mr. Speaker, we have one operator who I believe will look to run a cable from Europe through Bermuda . . . just a minor correction—Europe, Bermuda, US. So there is already an operator.

And let us just be very clear here, Mr. Speaker, the level of capital that it requires to even be in this space is in the hundreds of millions of billions of dollars. There is no company that is going to be laying a cable anywhere on the globe in the subsea area that does not have billions of dollars potentially available to invest. Now, I am not saying that those billions of dollars are going to come here. What I am saying is that those are the types of companies that will look to Bermuda to invest in the opportunities that our subsea cable framework provides. And they are already parking up. They are already investigating and they are

already looking at how they are going to file an application to Bermuda.

We are working with the Regulatory Authority. We have developed a one-stop shop approach to this, which is very attractive to that industry which does not like to deal with too much red tape and looks for jurisdictions where they can land cables on land without dealing with some of the heavy regulatory bureaucracy that they have to put up with when they are landing or dealing with Europe or certainly North America.

Mr. Speaker, moving on, one of the other areas that is exciting, and which I spoke about before, is energy. There are real opportunities, Mr. Speaker, in energy for Bermuda. The future is in diversification. We have been well served over the past 100 years by the utility known as Bermuda Electric Light Company, Ascendant, and now I believe it is changing its name to Liberty. But the future now is with the diversification of the energy sector. And I am certain that the existing bulk generation utility, Liberty, will play a major role in that future. But the future is in diversification. And diversification means taking on different types of generation which will be renewables.

We have an integrated resource plan, Mr. Speaker, which contemplates shaping our energy future going forward because this is an effort that we can ill afford. If Bermuda is to be an affordable place to live for all of her residents, if it is to remain affordable for investment in business, to develop tourism and other very wonderful opportunities we have, we must have an affordable structure for operation and that will include energy.

It is expensive now to operate and live in Bermuda. The cost of energy in Bermuda is one of the highest in the world, much less the region, and this is something that all islands actually are plagued with. We are not the only one. Energy costs are high here, and they are high as an Island jurisdiction because we cannot link up to other energy networks and diversify and have cheaper sources. Our sources are self-contained, they are here and it is expensive to bring oil to this Island with the fluctuations in market prices to power our energy sector. So, we must diversify. We must become greener, cleaner, and cheaper. And the only way to do that is by investing in renewable energy.

But we have a plan. We have a plan that is going to not only help with the huge capital investment, and the IRP [Integrated Resource Plan] is what has been placed to do that, and the IRP contemplates, Mr. Speaker, at a *minimum*, at a minimum level of investment nearly \$300 million worth of economic opportunity of investment in energy. But we want to also focus on something a little bit smaller, which is on the average person who may not be able to afford the green energy panels or some other energy efficiency measures, Mr. Speaker.

So, we are creating a green energy fund and we are titling that fund the Economic and Environmen-

tal Justice Fund, because we want this fund to bring about equity and affordability and opportunity in energy. That means that we are creating and developing a fund structure that will bring in investment from the private sector, that will allow those investments to help support the average household with being able to deploy green energy, as well as conservation and efficiency measures. Not only with that Mr. Speaker, will be the jobs created as a result of that diversification.

The diversification of energy sector means the diversification of jobs—jobs [for] people who will install the panels on the homes, people who will do the energy assessments, people who will do other things to bring about conservation and efficiency measures to our residences, to small businesses, to large businesses. Because this is where the growth and energy right now is [found], for bringing in and aggressively as a country pursuing renewable energy.

We have seen an exciting project at the Pompano Beach Resort. They have invested heavily in renewable energy, and we are looking for other major commercial operators and properties in the tourism sector to do the same. And also, we want our residents, our average everyday residents to benefit from the Green Revolution in energy. So, that is why this green energy Economic and Environmental Justice Fund is being created, to help bring that opportunity to the average house in Bermuda. And we are excited about this and we expect to be able to roll this fund out and at least a presentation around it before the end of the year, because we know that this is an area where many would like to invest. There are many people already in Bermuda committed to green energy, and we want to create a facility to bring that investment on Island.

Another area that is important, Mr. Speaker, is the Blue Economy. The oceans around us are precious and important and have supported Bermuda's development and her economic viability for centuries. It is only within perhaps the recent hundred years that we have actually focused solely on the land of Bermuda to generate our economic viability and our economic opportunity. For most of the 400 or so years of our history, it was connected with the ocean, with shipping, with building shipping, with privateering, with involvement with a number of wars where Bermuda ship captains and Bermuda shipping moved cargo in and out of waters that were blockaded, so blockade running. Those are some of the things, as well as bringing foodstuffs to Bermuda from other parts of the world.

Well, we have got to get back to ensuring that we can maximise the opportunity of the oceans around us. That is why we are working with the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme, with the Waitt Foundation and even other foundations such as the Rocky Mountain Institute to actually work on opportunities that we have in the Blue Economy.

There are three areas that are key and crucial to this, Mr. Speaker. One has to do with fisheries, one has to do with blue tourism and one has to do with energy. Those are the three areas of focus that the Blue Economy is going to have and that we have opportunities within a marine environment to move forward. That will bring about a growth in our economy, if we can use the ocean as a springboard for *growing* aspects of our economy. There are great tourism opportunities with the beautiful oceans around us.

There are opportunities in the energy sector. I can tell you now, Mr. Speaker, and tell this House and the country that we already have potential possibilities with using our oceans to generate clean, affordable energy. There is actually a Bermudian partner right now who is a partner with a major international firm that is looking to bring a major ocean-based technology here to Bermuda. That is going to be a part of it. We also are looking at possibilities around floating solar and floating wind—all energy opportunities that can actually help and we have our oceans to provide those opportunities.

We also are looking at in the energy sector, as I will just jump back to that, Mr. Speaker, from Blue Economy, on projects that we can generate on Island, of a utility scale in energy that will allow local investors to participate as the lead investors and not bring people from outside, but giving our local entrepreneurs in the energy sector and other sectors an opportunity to invest in the diversification of energy, clean energy for Bermuda.

But going back to the Blue Economy, our fisheries (and I know that the Honourable Member Mr. Furbert touched on this earlier) are an area of opportunity. Within our 200 square mile zone, there are fishing fishery opportunities. There are people who have already in Bermuda sought to invest in larger vessels that they can go out and fish and take advantage of the opportunities we have that could not only develop much more affordable access to fish on Island that is cheaper, but also potentially develop an export market with our fisheries in a responsible way consistent with international best practice.

Now, there is the other area. As I said, there are three areas: tourism, energy and fisheries. So, within the Blue Economy those are the areas. There is one last area that I would like to touch on, Mr. Speaker, which is related to our economic development plan around the initiatives that my actual Ministry is responsible for, that is creating a regulatory sandbox. Bermuda must become to develop further a place of not only innovation as we have done in insurance, as we have done in tourism in the past, but we must become an innovation place for technology.

We know that FinTech is an area that we have been exploring, but there is also innovation in the energy sector that is available to Bermuda. We have the possibility of being somewhere that may be able to look at our ocean as a key generator of ener-

gy. Not only is that exciting, Mr. Speaker, but if we can bring some of these innovative energy projects to Bermuda and too, Mr. Speaker, to be operable in Bermuda, we could potentially be 100 per cent powered by renewable energy by, potentially, 2040. Our goal is to be renewable primarily in the area of 80 [per cent] to 90 per cent by 2035, but we are pushing the envelope a little bit harder, because we believe that this is what is in the best interest of Bermuda.

We could potentially have 100 per cent renewable energy generation in this country by 2040. Those are the sort of projects that is going to bring enormous investment because the Bermudians who are involved with the energy sector and particularly ones who at some point in the future we will know more about is bringing a major player to Bermuda who is going to deliver on a project that could potentially help us get to that 100 per cent. That is going to bring hundreds of millions of dollars of investment. As this project is piloted in Bermuda, it will bring an opportunity to create jobs around that project. It will bring excitement and attention to Bermuda as an innovator internationally in the energy sector.

Mr. Speaker, how much more time do I have left?

The Speaker: It is now 6:09 and you finish at 6:15.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay, I have a little more time to talk. Well, that's good. I am not going to say I am going to use it all. But Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the opportunities that within my Ministry and the Ministry team who have been working in this area have to contribute to Bermuda's economic recovery. Like I said when I started, Mr. Speaker, there are five key areas that we are focusing on: Our national space strategy which itself is linked with technology and education and high value jobs and positioning Bermuda in line with our history, Mr. Speaker, with being associated with the growing commercial space industry. Companies like SpaceX are already working with Bermuda, NASA and the European Space Agency. We want to expand our opportunities there to be an innovator in the area of space with space risk, with space sustainability and providing services to the growing space economy.

Telecommunications: Continue to play a major role in telecommunications through the use of the UV light work and the growth and development in the transatlantic cable sector to expand broadband and data movement throughout the world. So, Bermuda has an opportunity now to be a part of that, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, our subsea cable framework is setting a buzz out in the global community of telecommunications, and we are attracting the attention we need to make things happen.

Our green energy fund, you know, our green energy [Economic and] Environmental Justice Fund we believe will contribute to the goal of this govern-

ment bringing down the cost of living in Bermuda. Clean, affordable energy will help bring down the cost of living and the cost of investment by those who seek to invest in Bermuda. Producing energy through fossil fuel is the most expensive way to do this and as everybody complains about energy costs, the one major thing, Mr. Speaker, that will contribute to bringing down those costs is moving away from fossil fuels and embracing the green revolution.

Mr. Speaker, our oceans are our future, which is why through the development of the Marine Spatial Plan with our work with the Waitt Foundation and developing the Blue Economy focusing on blue tourism, energy around our oceans and expanding our fisheries in a sustainable way are areas right now that as we go forward with the Government's commitment to this development plan will help to ensure that Bermuda not only has a prosperous economic future but a clean, sustainable energy future and affordable future as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to do my presentation on this very exciting Economic Recovery Plan. I thank the Minister of Finance for bringing this Motion so that we can tell the country what we have planned. But it will not stop here. I am certain that we will take it on the road, Mr. Speaker, and talk more to our public about what our plans are for the future. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words.

The Speaker: That sounds like MP Jackson. MP Jackson, you have your 30 minutes.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you very much.

Before I start my few words, I do want to send out my appreciation and thanks once again to all of the essential workers who worked selflessly to keep our country safe and to keep us healthy during this critical time and I always want them to know just how much we appreciate their service. And to give credit to the Premier and the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security for their hard work and the heads of department at the Bermuda Hospital and to Carika Weldon for what she has done in the lab. They have certainly given an awful lot to it.

It begs to show the amount of effort it takes to launch something that we have never launched before. We see how there are so many new skills and so many new procedures and activities that we have to put into place when something absolutely brand new comes our way. And this Bermuda Economic Recovery Plan certainly does have a selection of new indus-

tries, new opportunities that have some complexities to them and so we are going to have to work that out.

Now the Minister of Finance in his economic plan did mention and disclose the fact that we had a decade of low growth and significant structural economic challenges for Bermuda. And he was referencing, I believe, 2008, 2009. And I want to say that when the OBA did come into power in 2012 we were able to plant the seeds of economic stimulus that had been bearing fruit from our time in office through the current Government's time in office, and because of activities like the building of the St. Regis Hotel and America's Cup and the renovation and revitalisation of the Hamilton Princess.

All of these things have provided job opportunities, have created an increased economic activity within the country and it is those seeds that have helped to get us through this critical period that we have been through in the past 16 months or so.

The Minister also mentioned when he was introducing the plan, and it is within the plan sort of what our current state of affairs is as far as our financial position is concerned, and I do ask that . . . it does not have to necessarily be today, but it would be interesting to find out in the near future what our economic situation is now. The Minister of Finance had estimated about \$15 million had been set aside for COVID-19-related expenses in 2021, and it will be interesting to find out just what the actual expenses have been to date for some of the large expenditure that we have had to put out due to the pandemic.

So, we are looking at (according to this economic plan) medium-term economic growth. And the plan states that there are 81 proposed initiatives and that there are 31 that have been prioritised. My question really is that when I look at all of the different initiatives that are being put on the table today, to me, there seems to be a lack of detail. And I have been listening to the Ministers because I have been interested in finding out just how some of these initiatives are actually going to be implemented, even if it is sort of a higher view of what some of the steps will be. But I believe that everyone in Bermuda would like to have a bit more of a road map as to what steps and what time frames would be involved in order to initiate some of these new industry and economic streams.

I noticed too that although this is more of an expense for Government, but there is very little in the economic plan about education. But yes, we are going to move forward but there was not that much attention that was given to education and I just feel as though that could be a missed opportunity. The Minister earlier today had a Ministerial Statement to encourage more to become certified in teaching and because for Government education is such a huge responsibility that I would have liked to have heard a little bit more about how we would be able to balance some of the revenue we are generating with the expenditure that would be allocated to educating our young people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I picked out just a couple of these initiatives that I would like to focus on. The first one is medical tourism. Again, the time frame that we are in right now in the midst of COVID-19 which has been a health and a medical crisis, it is just when is the good time to introduce something like medical tourism when people may be feeling a little skittish about things to do with getting medical procedures, especially if they are elective, the fact that our hospitals have had a higher volume of traffic because of the COVID-19 cases that have had to be managed in the hospitals. And so, you know, I am just trying to set an environment Mr. Speaker, to say when is the right time for some of these initiatives? And even if we had had a bit of a time frame, I think that that would have been one detail that may have helped us.

Now yes, the OBA, certainly Shawn Crockwell, Pat Gordon-Pamplin have all supported the concept of medical tourism. I do want to caveat that by saying that that was a decade ago. And here we are a decade on and we in Bermuda have the privilege of watching the Cayman Islands and their success or otherwise in medical tourism. It has been seen that the actual volumes have not been as great as they may have wanted. So it would be really good for something like medical tourism to have a bit of an actuarial study and analysis to just see whether there is even a market for it, whether we in Bermuda, because we are so expensive and the price of medical services is so high that . . . one of the pieces that I understand about medical tourism is that people go to other countries where medical procedures are much cheaper. And so, I am not quite sure how the Government hopes to frame this medical tourism that won't fall off by the wayside because we have got competitors in other jurisdictions that are able to provide medical tourism at a much less cost than it might be here in Bermuda.

The other is that I did a little research, and I found that there are studies that have been done, especially in the United States and American markets where there are quite a few people, a majority that do not necessarily feel that having medical procedures overseas is something that they would choose, that they have a perception that having medical procedures overseas is negative and that offshore care might not be as good as the care that they could have on their mainland, whether that is in North America or Europe. So, I am just curious again how much and how deep the Government has really done to analyse some of these initiatives to see whether they are actually things that would be practical and productive here in Bermuda.

And the other piece about something like medical tourism and not to be critical but just things that need to be considered, things that the general public in Bermuda are going to be asking is, where are we going to find the people to work in a facility if we did have the private sector (as I believe one Mem-

ber had mentioned earlier) support something like a medical tourism facility or smaller hospital, or whatever it might end up being, since we have a shortage of medical staff here in Bermuda anyway as it is. So, I am just curious where we would find those that would be skilled and want to work there and if it were as attractive as it seems on paper, would we then have this exodus of health care workers from the Bermuda Hospital moving into some private hospital? And then we are left stranded looking for hard-to-find medical staff, in particular nurses for the Bermuda King Edward VII Memorial Hospital. So, it is just looking at what those impacts are going to be and whether they are going to be feasible for us in the medium term.

Vertical farming, Mr. Speaker. I have kept my eye on this one for a little bit, and again, as a medium-term industry that could be introduced here in Bermuda, okay, that is fine. But the details; we don't know anything. We don't know where this vertical farm location would be. We don't have any clue of the level of technology that would be required to furnish one of these vertical farms. We have just by the sound of it gotten into conversations with local farmers to find out how this might work for them. I am aware that there are already successful hydroponics here on the Island anyway. So, are we competing with ourselves? How would something like vertical farming . . . what are the details as far as the logistics and the technology and the buildings and the location?

I would also suspect that places like the Department of Parks would then have to come up with all kinds of policies or do some research to find out about the importation of seeds, having to work out what kind of import procedures would be concerned, various, I would imagine there are going to be a number of liquids and other kinds of substances that would be needed in order to promote the growth of plants in the vertical farms and how are we going to police that? Is there going to be a special team set up just for, dedicated to vertical farming and the importation of all the supplies that would be needed?

I would suspect some of those supplies are things that have not been brought into Bermuda before. I do not know, but how would we be able to handle the inspection of and the management of those kinds of products coming into the Island?

And then the expertise. I mean, from the reading that I have done it is this delicate balance of lighting and water and timing. And although those may sound like simple ingredients getting it right from the farmers and the enthusiasts, the sort of hydroponic enthusiasts on the Island, it is not easy. It does take quite a bit of time to understand and skill to get it right. And who those experts are going to be that will come in? I would imagine for vertical farming you are going to need different kinds of engineers, you are going to need horticulturalists and whether the Government has considered the capacity to take on those kinds of professionals.

And we have and it has been mentioned earlier today in a previous debate, been mentioned in this debate, but we have an excess of farmland, and I thank the Minister that these Government farmlands will be protected and they will not be given away for development. But at the same time, what can we do now, and I would imagine in the very short term, to create jobs and maybe create additional produce now using that space that is available, empty and waiting to be used.

Mr. Speaker, there was mention in the Bermuda Economic Recovery Plan some conversation about pensions. And I am reaching the age, so now I am sort of personally vested in this and I am learning more about our pensions and not only as an individual but as a country. I clearly understand the importance of being able to have a fund, a saving, a protected savings for our country so that when we all retire, we know that we can withdraw from that savings and be able to have some money to help sustain us in our retirement. But our funds, our pension funds in particular, are getting lower, right? Every day they are getting lower, and I certainly, I cannot fault the Minister of Finance in his initiatives to allow for withdrawals from private pensions.

I cannot fault the Minister for giving contribution holidays for some of the other pensions that the government manages. But with all of that, we are depleting our savings. And I am just curious what is going to be done to help to revitalise and replenish our pensions so that we can continue to save and provide some form of prosperity or standard of living for those who are working really hard now, but in 20 years, 15 years when it is time for them to make their withdrawal, that there will be ample funds there to support them in their retirement.

And so I call on the Minister of Finance to please keep the protection of our pensions in the forefront of his mind. I know that that is not generating jobs. I know that that is not boosting our economy. But it is absolutely fundamental that we are able to have something put aside for that rainy day, for that retirement. And we must find a way to encourage and stimulate our pension funds, for the future.

Mr. Speaker, another point that I wanted to speak to today about the economic recovery, and that is the changing dynamic within the working world. So for those who work in an office environment, as has been mentioned earlier today, we have all become familiar with working from home. Going into the office is now becoming almost—and I would not be too surprised if it shortly becomes almost taboo, that going into the office is not going to necessarily be a part of the new era moving forward. Mr. Speaker, we have to face the fact that coming out of this COVID-19 pandemic is going to be—in my personal opinion, it is going to be transformational for us.

And we are living in a new turn of an era. So, you know, we have had the Industrial Revolution. And

I can see that we are definitely going to be moving into something new in the coming years. And with that, the changing dynamic of those who are working, what they are doing, their behaviour, their routines are all going to be very different.

And many of the companies are finding that, with technology and a digital world, their model of doing business is changing as well. One, you do not even necessarily have to be in the jurisdiction where your company is to work every day. People are working from everywhere, and we have seen that through our successful residency certificate. And we are finding that there are a number of jobs that used to be done by humans that are now being done by computers, and so there fewer requirements for humans to be in the office environment.

And whether the Government is considering that—because as much as we may feel like, *Okay, well, we have to get the wheels turning again and we have to get the economy going again*, but it is not necessarily that we are going to be starting the car and going down the same roads that we did before. Because we are going to find that the path is changing, and whether we are considering those changes and incorporating them into our future plans. Because otherwise, we may not be considering people who may find themselves changing their professions or re-skilling, retooling themselves. And if we are thinking, *They are all working from home, everything is fine*, but in actual fact technology and the digital world have shown up and that there are more people who are quietly losing their jobs and that there will be more demand for more employment, whether that is being factored into the consideration.

So earlier, Mr. Speaker, I had spoken a little bit about the expertise that is going to be needed for, you know—and I just chose vertical farming and medical tourism as two that I picked out. But I would venture to say that many of the 31 priorities that the Minister of Finance had listed in the Economic Recovery Plan are going to need expertise. And here enters the elephant in the room. We are going to probably have to have a national conversation about the fact that if we are going to introduce a number of these initiatives, we are going to have to welcome experts and their families to come to Bermuda for a period of time in order to teach us how to use this new technology. And with that, we may by default raise our population through immigration.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, for me when I reflect on some of the pet peeves and some of the feelings of discontent around some of our historical reasons for immigration having sort of gone off the rail, this is different. And I believe that this is different, and it is worthy of contemplation and national conversation. And that is that this time we would be inviting people to the Island to teach us something, to provide a service, to take that one expert and create hopefully, you know, dozens of Bermudians who then will be

able to learn a new skill, become a part of a new industry. And so it becomes a grateful relationship that hopefully will provide some mutual satisfaction.

But it does not in any way negate the fact, Mr. Speaker, that with these initiatives this may be our ticket. Because if there are experts who are well-educated, successful in their fields of expertise, they come to Bermuda for two or three years to set up some of these initiatives like vertical farms or to help set up medical tourism. They come here, they provide us with their skills, we learn from their skills and then maybe they go on to their next adventure or their next lot in life.

But we will at some point probably have to consider this. And I certainly would not want the population to view any future immigration of experts, to confuse that with the historical missteps of the past, and that we are understanding and we have clarity around the next generation of folks who may come to the Island to live for a period of time and significantly boost our economy.

The other elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker, is efficiencies. And Government is—you know, I do not know. We have gone through the SAGE Report. We have dealt with some very fragile and delicate topics over the years around efficiencies in government. And one of the thoughts and ideas that I have been pondering is whether it would not be worthwhile for Government to consider having priority ministries, ministries that governments absolutely have to have in order to function. And those would be things like Education, Immigration, Health, Transport.

But there are other areas/departments that we might be able to give just a little more autonomy to the people who are presently working in those areas, giving them an opportunity to work slightly apart from government. Government would be their main client, and they would receive much of their instruction through government and support through government, but giving an entrepreneurship-feel for that. Now, I know that there is this horrible word called *privatization*. And I do not want to go there, but I do want to see or at least have the Government explore the idea of allowing some form of autonomy where people who are experts in their field are given an opportunity to inject some entrepreneurship into their work as civil servants.

And again it is the kind of thing that needs a lot of focus on detail. But I believe that it is a worthy thought as far as looking for some efficiencies and allowing the entrepreneurial spirit of the civil servants who would be working with a little more autonomy an opportunity to maybe reach out and negotiate with Government to allow for other, private customers so that there is an opportunity for some profit generation.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is the time for us to brainstorm. This is the time for us to shoot for the stars. This is the time when governments have an opportunity to throw it all out there and say, *What else*

can we think of? What is out there that could be possible for long-term economic stimulus for the Island? And so, you know, I just believe that there are efficiencies that we can find; it is just a matter of maybe moving off of the traditional paths that we have considered and brainstorming in a new space to make something that works right for Bermuda.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to close out now. And I feel a little worried about the Economic Plan because I just do not know that we have enough low-hanging fruit, things that we can work on right now that do not need an expert and do not need a whole bunch of contracts and do not need a lot of time to put in place—the things that we can do here locally. And earlier one of the Members spoke to the caregiving environment. I see that there is great potential there. I believe that there is potential to develop more assisted or community senior housing much in the way that the housing trust have pulled together lovely communities such as Heydon Trust, et cetera, that Government could create more environments for things like assisted living, that we could encourage more—

The Speaker: Member, you have one minute left on the clock.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Okay.

Have a more entrepreneurial spirit around things that we already do well and pick up on some of the low-hanging fruit that is there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Jackson.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member? Any other Member?

[Pause]

The Speaker: It sounds like someone is trying to get our attention.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, is that you?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, it is me, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your 30 minutes, sir.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I was waiting for one of the Government Members to speak. But if they are not willing to speak on the Economic Plan, I certainly was not going to let this debate collapse at this point in time, that is for sure.

The Speaker: No, we do not want it to collapse. So go ahead and make your contribution.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: It might be an opportune time to speak, Mr. Speaker, because Bermuda is about to kick off at seven o'clock in the match against Suriname, so I can speak now and then watch it on TV [INAUDIBLE].

The Speaker: Okay. Just a reminder to turn your camera on.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: My camera is coming on now. The signal should be coming through to you any time soon, Mr. Speaker.

So if I am speaking on Bermuda's scores, please excuse my cheer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, getting back to the serious business at hand, I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight on the Economic Plan that the Government has tabled for debate. And let me start out by saying, Mr. Speaker, that I generally do not support the current Economic Recovery Plan. And here is why, Mr. Speaker, because at the beginning of the debate tonight, the Government changed it from a take note motion to a supportive motion. And just like the debate before on the Planning Act, I certainly want to see Bermuda succeed like everyone in the House of Assembly wants to see Bermuda succeed. I want to see us recover. I want to see us get into a much better position because we are in a very weak position right now with many Bermudians struggling.

However, there is a great deal about the plan that I believe is full of hope and full of dreams, but lacks opportunity. And so I say that to start out [stating] my concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance in his overview earlier, as this debate started after lunch, talked about the economy and the challenges we have had over the past couple of years. And certainly as a Member of Parliament and as the Premier for a number of years, I am aware that our economy has struggled. Certainly, we were set back in 2010, 2009/10 with some of the challenges that we had here and some of the challenges that reverberated throughout the world. However, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is certainly good news that during the tenure of the OBA we saw a great deal of recovery.

But the economy has weakened since the PLP first became Government in 2017. And clearly the economy was in a weak state before we were lambasted by COVID-19 at the start of last year. I find it interesting and it brings a smile to my face, Mr. Speaker, when I see the current Government involved in such events as SailGP [Sail Grand Prix] when clearly they love to chastise the America's Cup when they have an opportunity. It brings a smile to my face to see the current Government—

Mr. Wayne Caines: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Go ahead. I am not the Speaker, Honourable Member, but carry on. I am happy for that.

The Speaker: Yes, point of order. We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Wayne Caines: Mr. Speaker, the Government did not oppose the America's Cup. The Government opposed the spending and the way that the OBA went about the process. So we were not against the America's Cup. There were some financial things that were taking place, the expenses. And the teachers and other people, the civil service, were not given a raise. And there was a moratorium on raises in the civil service. We were not against the America's Cup. We were against how it was financed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, thanks for that. But clearly the spending on the America's Cup, with the report that was done after, it clearly showed that it was very successful for Bermuda—so successful—

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The current Government, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I question whether it could be deemed a success when only 16 per cent of the financial beneficiaries were described as Black or of mixed origin. That is the problem at its core of the America's Cup above everything else, the failure to equally and equitably distribute economic opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take a valid point of order, but those types of comments can come up when those Members who have not spoken interject. I think it is just wasting my time, Mr. Speaker. But the America's Cup was a success. And everyone had an opportunity to be involved, and most people certainly supported it, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue on, Mr. Speaker. I will not be side-tracked by Honourable Members who want to interject, when they have an opportunity to speak and they sat [INAUDIBLE] and they have not pushed the microphone to speak.

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Government lauds the opening of St. Regis when that was an OBA project which they had some concerns around from the beginning. And now those concerns seem to have disappeared. I lay that case, Mr. Speaker, because just about the only thing that is going at this time are opportunities that the OBA created. So yes. We need an Economic Recovery Plan because we are in a very precarious position, Mr. Speaker. We are in a very precarious position at the present time because COVID-19 has wreaked havoc in our community and around the world, Mr. Speaker.

And as I get into the balance of my comments on this debate, I think it is important, while my colleague Susan Jackson did a commendable job in an overview of her thoughts on the plan and the Opposition Leader I thought set the stage very well for the Opposition's side of this debate. Susan Jackson, Honourable Member, commended all of those involved in helping us work through COVID-19. I want to piggyback on that because I think it is important that we remember the tireless work that all of those individuals did for many, many, many months. And the work must continue on.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also must reflect on the vibe that is in the community at the present time. Many Bermudians are tired. Many Bermudians are worn out. Many Bermudians are worn down. And they are lacking patience, Mr. Speaker. I mean, COVID-19, through the restrictions, through the curfew, through the changes of regulations has certainly worn many Bermudians down. And so we need recovery. We need to rebuild. We need to revitalise. And it is important that we get on with it, Mr. Speaker.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, we must never forget that COVID-19 is still with us. We cannot forget about the threat of COVID-19 because it is still here. And we could have another fight. We still have curfews, Mr. Speaker. We still have a curfew, we still have restrictions. And we cannot forget that COVID-19 is still very much on our doorsteps. Especially, Mr. Speaker, when you take a look at the fact that our vaccine rate of one dose is only 58 per cent, and our two-dose is 52 per cent. This is a concern, Mr. Speaker, as the opportunity for spread at this level of vaccination—

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

[Pause]

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

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I accept the point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order. We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House with his vaccination statistics, speaking about 15 per cent on two doses. That cannot be correct. Unless I misheard, that is not correct.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Honourable Premier, I said 58 per cent on one dose and 52 per cent on two doses. That is correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me for that clarification if you did not hear it.

And so with those levels of vaccinations, Honourable Speaker, we still need to pay attention to COVID-19. And this is a real concern because we do not want any opportunities for spread in our community. And I support the Government in every effort they make, as I said in my last speech in the House of Assembly on the motion to adjourn, I believe two weeks ago. I support all of the efforts on vaccination. And it is a real concern that even at this point, with all of the science which has been elucidated to the people of Bermuda, with all of the conversations we have had about it, there still is a hesitancy to get the vaccine. And it is a concern, and it is a real disappointment, Mr. Speaker, that we see that a significant number of doses might have to be disposed of in the coming weeks because their shelf life has expired.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to soldier forward and do the right thing to deal with COVID-19 because we do have a couple more stairs to climb before we get to the top and we can see all of the light at the end of the tunnel.

So, Mr. Speaker, this plan in my view is predicated that COVID-19 is behind us. Because if COVID-19 comes back in any way, Mr. Speaker, then everything we talk about in this plan will be pushed back—or speaking in a different language, could be put on the shelf for a period of time while we fight. Because Lord knows, Mr. Speaker, that everyone involved in the battle against COVID-19 gets consumed by it, especially when we have a fight. And it is very real, it is very time-consuming; that is all that you can put your attention to. So if we have any upsurge again in COVID-19, then this plan will clearly be impeded gravely.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have read the Economic Recovery Plan. I have listened very closely to the debate. And a couple of things have struck me, Mr. Speaker. One of the things is that more Government Members have not jumped up and wanted to speak.

And certainly when the Finance Minister spoke earlier, he alluded to the fact that Members of the Cabinet would talk about areas under their responsibility. And we have only heard from a few of them at the present time.

Another thing that struck me, Mr. Speaker, is that as we go now into probably the fourth hour of this debate, I have heard very little conversation from Government Members about hospitality and international business. And so while we look at the seven main principles of this Economic Recovery Plan that the Minister of Finance talked about earlier in the debate today, one of the overriding principles in my view, Mr. Speaker, must be that we need to bolster, boost and grow international business and hospitality.

And why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? I say that clearly because international business and hospitality are the number-one and two drivers of our economy. They play an important part of our economy. And we need to do everything we can to take hold of those opportunities in both of those industries because it could be very beneficial for Bermuda. And I thought that there would be more of a focus in the plan on those two pillars of our economy and more of a conversation today in this debate about it.

And, Mr. Speaker, allow me just to reflect for a moment on why it is important that we deal with international business and hospitality. If you look at the job numbers for 2020 that were published in the economic report of the budget earlier this year that we debated in March, you will see that the largest employer of the Island is public administration. In 2020 public administration grew from the fourth-largest employer to the first employer, the largest employer. Now, that is a concern in itself because that puts more of a burden on the taxpayer, but I am not going to address that today. What I will address is the fact that international business is the second-largest employer on the Island, growing from the third to the second with a loss of four jobs in 2020. That is an interesting fact, Mr. Speaker. International business by this report lost four jobs in 2020, but still grew to the second-largest employer.

The third largest employer, Mr. Speaker, is wholesale and retail trade, which fell from the second to the third with a loss of 264 jobs. The fourth-largest employer is hospitality. Or in this report it is called *accommodations and food service*. It fell from the largest employer to the fourth-largest employer with a loss of 1,784 jobs. Now, I will come back to that in a minute, Mr. Speaker.

Other notable job losses were 104 in transportation and storage, 82 in construction, 77 in information and communications, and 78 in manufacturing. So from 2019 to 2020 we had a loss of 2,924 jobs. The Government has explained in that financial report that 935 of those jobs were actually job losses, and 989 they classify as layoffs. And I mention those numbers, Mr. Speaker, because it is important to clari-

fy and classify what we have lost and the opportunity for what we have to gain back and what we must gain back.

And why do I say we must gain it back, Mr. Speaker? Well, the simple reason is that we lost all of those jobs. And secondly, Bermudians currently are unemployed. And they have the skill sets to do those jobs. The numbers clearly show it. Not only the 264 jobs in wholesale and retail, which were lost in my view because the economy collapsed; the 1,784 jobs in hospitality we can gain back, and more. If you look at the 104 jobs in transport, that is because of COVID-19. We can gain those back. Construction is the same. Information and communication and manufacturing are the same.

So this plan is short in itself because it does not devote enough attention and detail to rebuilding the critical infrastructure of our supporting industries in international business and hospitality. And there is great opportunity there, Mr. Speaker. Why do I say that? Well, for two main reasons, Mr. Speaker. The first reason would be international business has proven definitively through the challenge of COVID-19 that they can work from Bermuda. They can work from home. They can do their jobs. And they still can meet all of the expectations of their clients. What a great place to be to do business!

And now that COVID-19 is more on the side of being controlled, why do we not grasp the opportunity to grow international business in Bermuda? Because most of the companies that do business here, they have branches all over the world with thousands of employees all over the world. And we have just shown that they can just conduct their business from here, safe and secure, and in a great environment. Why cannot we lure them to Bermuda to increase the footprint? This creates jobs in Bermuda and creates opportunities for Bermudians.

Secondly, hospitality. A minimum of 1,784 jobs have been lost. When you put all of the transportation and construction and all of that in, it is over 2,000 jobs easily have been lost because of the collapse of hospitality. With the new hotel opening up, with the Loren being open for a couple of years, the Aurora on the cusp of seeing some exciting things, with the potential for the Fairmont Southampton, we have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to get hospitality to boom again.

If all the talk of new air routes manages to take flight, Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity to put Bermuda back on the map that we were starting to get on with the advent of tourism in 2016 and 2017 when the numbers were heading upwards under the OBA. And the America's Cup put us on the world map by being broadcast all over the world, Mr. Speaker.

We should be focusing here and now and every day forward on the opportunity not only in the plan, but also on international business and hospitality. Because if we do not, we lose significant opportuni-

ty and we lose significant opportunity for Bermudians who are already out of work and know the industry and want to be part of that industry. So, Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed not to see more of a footprint in this ERP [on international business and hospitality.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the time that I have left allow me to focus a bit on some of the seven pillars on how the plan was built around. Those seven pillars are (1) diversify the economy, (2) make financial markets work better, (3) build and enhance our infrastructure, (4) to expand the resident population, (5) introduce labour market reform, (6) reform the delivery of health care, and (7) develop supporting legal and regulatory networks.

Now, some of those are great. I agree we need to make financial markets work better. I am not sure that a digital bank is going to help us greatly in that regard, but hey, it is an opportunity; go ahead and try to take hold of it. I support building and enhancing infrastructure because infrastructure is very important. And we can see what the United States is trying to do on their recovery plan. But they are much different than we are. With their recovery plan it is focused around a lot of infrastructure. But they have a different problem, Mr. Speaker. Their economy is rebounding already as they are coming out of COVID-19. So they need to improve that infrastructure.

But, Mr. Speaker, where I have some concerns with this point on developing and enhancing infrastructure is with some of the ideas on a shore—a fish processing plant. Because up until still right at this point, at seven o'clock during this debate, I am hearing very few specifics about the fish processing plant, the Shoreside Facility as Minister Furbert talked about. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have been in business for 43 years. I have hired thousands of people, grown businesses, been involved in myriad types of businesses. So I think I understand a little bit about what it takes to launch a business with an opportunity to be successful. Because what everyone looks for is for opportunities to be successful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I hear about this Shoreside processing facility for fish, the first question that I kept waiting to hear answered by the Honourable Minister Furbert was, What did the cost/benefit analysis show us on this endeavour? It is one thing to invest a significant amount of money in something, but no one—no one—will invest money in any plan until they realise that there is a real potential for that plan to bring back the opportunity that they expected. So I do not see the clear plan. I certainly do not. I understand the vision, but there is no detail on the budget, there is no real detail on the support of the fishermen. There are no details on what the revenue streams will be [that are] required to make this effective. There are no details on how many jobs will be created through this fish processing plant. There are no details on where the fish will be sold, local or overseas. And ex-

plain to us how this will lower the cost of food in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I appreciate the numbers the Honourable Minister gave about what [fish was caught] locally and what was imported, Mr. Speaker. But we must also understand, Mr. Speaker, that this industry is a tough industry. I recall some concerns from members of the public who reached out to me some months back when there was a long-line fishing boat that was berthed out of the East End of the Island. And I think now that that boat does not trade anymore in our waters because [it] could not make it viable.

And when I look back at some of the research I have done about fishing throughout the world, and you have to understand and accept that some of the world's largest fishing fleets like those from China stay out for months on end, pay their workers just a couple of dollars an hour and they never see shore for four or five, six, seven months, how do we compete with that to make our Shoreside Fishing Facility a success? How do we create viable jobs for Bermudians to make it a success? And moreover, Mr. Speaker, in talking to local fishermen whom I have talked to, they do not support the plan, because they do not see it as needed. I believe there is already a small fishing plant in Bermuda. And so before I can support this I need to see a proper cost/benefit analysis.

And when the Minister who has tried to answer some questions over Parliamentary Questions over a period of time, when the Minister fails to give anything concrete, I get nervous! I get nervous that taxpayers' dollars will once again be squandered and there will not be the opportunity we need, Mr. Speaker. And I might have heard the Honourable Minister wrong when I heard the Honourable Minister say that construction will be complete in the later part of 2021. But here we are. We are already talking about Cup Match. It is the middle of the year. It is June. I have not had the questions answered that would satisfy me in any way that I could support a project like that.

So infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, yes. We need to improve our infrastructure. But this facility does not meet the smell test. And it certainly has not passed what I would consider to be a proper vetting to even get to this stage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the first item was diversifying our economy. Yes, I think we need to diversify our economy. And while I have not supported the Government at all times, Mr. Speaker, I would accept that we need to try to diversify. And I will go with the flow on some of these industries, new industries that the Government wants to talk about, but I will raise my concerns. So I have no issue if we investigate FinTech and all of the opportunities that are taken in this part of the creative new environment for business, Mr. Speaker.

But I would always express caution on not setting the bar high because this Government has a propensity to promise something and not deliver. We

were promised that by May 28 we would have community immunity with vaccines. And here it is on June 4th, and the deadline has passed and we are not there yet. So we cannot over promise and under deliver because people who are frustrated, people who are tired, people who have had enough of these restrictions are not going to accept it.

But here when we try to diversify our economy, let us get real about some of these, Mr. Speaker. Vertical farming, as my honourable colleague, Susan Jackson, has talked about earlier, vertical farming. It sounds good. It might look good on paper, Mr. Speaker. But again, I ask the Honourable Minister for the Cabinet Office, What cost/benefit analysis has been done? You know, we talked about it is going to be used for leafy greens, Mr. Speaker, because a large percentage of those are imported. Yes, I understand that only about 25 per cent is grown in Bermuda. And there are a number of reasons behind that which the Honourable Minister did not get involved in, right?

But I would like to know the cost/benefit analysis for this and who is going to work it. My understanding is that the local farmers feel that it is being forced on them and they would like to be supported in the usual ways of doing business. And we are talking about [how] we are going to set up a food cooperative to support the farmers and those in the industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, what are the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries supposed to do at the present time? Are they not supposed to support the local farmers, work with them on ideas and new initiatives to grow their industry, to make their industry better, Mr. Speaker? I thought that was all about—why are we creating another body to do some work where I have not seen a cost/benefit analysis? It has not been laid out for me on how it is going to work, Mr. Speaker.

Because if you took a plan like vertical farming or this fish processing plant into any reputable boardroom or management meeting room of any reputable business, they would send you packing within five minutes and say, *It's a grade school project. We need more meat on the bones for this*, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to see meat on the bones before we promise people too much and cannot deliver, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I support the expanding of the resident population, and I think that the Minister of Labour has communicated quite well with some of the opportunities talked about. I am glad to see an update today on some of those opportunities that we have. But we still have a long way to go. Because the sad thing is, Mr. Speaker, that we do not track our immigration numbers closely enough. And this is not a criticism of any government because it has been like that for some time. And I guess the reason why it is like that, Mr. Speaker, is the simple fact is up until probably 2009/10, immigration was not an issue. Because people wanted to immigrate to Bermuda; they did not

want to leave Bermuda. But more recently that has been a big challenge for many reasons, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague, the Opposition Leader, was spot-on with his analysis of it, and I do not need to repeat it in the time that I have left. It is a real concern, and we need to not only monitor those numbers, but we need to do something about those numbers, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the seven principles that Government is guided by, some of them do ring true to me, and I do have some real support for that. But I am concerned with some of the areas that are highlighted. And another area I will highlight, Mr. Speaker, is number 6, reform and delivery of health care on the Island. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have seen lots of talk through the years. We have seen little consultation through the years, Mr. Speaker. Meanwhile, the cost of health care continues to rise and the challenges we face within the industry continue to rise. And, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is going to happen with the cost of health care this year because we have not seen the legislation come to Parliament yet with the mandated increases that Government has. And with COVID-19 increasing the cost of health care generally throughout our community, we will see another drastic increase in health insurance premiums this year and probably next year as well.

So yes, we need to reform health care, Mr. Speaker. But I do not see the changes that Government has talked about at this point offering us the reform which provides quality service and reduced prices in any way. And so hopefully, now that the department has been so stressed and the Bermuda Health Council has been so stressed with COVID-19, [it] can actually devote some more attention to it and be more open about what their plans are and where we stand.

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: MP, you have a minute left. One minute left.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you. Just checking, thank you.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the final minute that I have I will say that people cannot recover on hope. People certainly cannot recover on dreams. People require opportunity. And, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time while Government launched their Economic Recovery Plan I am not sold on the opportunity that this plan provides. So I ask colleagues to work together to try to provide the opportunity in some of the main pillars we have while we continue to try to diversify and build. Because, Mr. Speaker, we can never forget what we have to build on and the expertise that Bermudians have, and they want to get back to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: MP De Silva.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to get my video going. Mr. Speaker, can you see me just yet?

The Speaker: No, we do not see you yet. We hear you here.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I hope the clock does not start until the . . . I am using—

The Speaker: Now we see you, and now you have your 30 minutes. There you go.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to make a contribution tonight. And let me say that this Government along with the people of the country have been through some really rough waters over the last year and a half. And I remember a few months back, Mr. Speaker—I am sure you remember—the Opposition, combined Opposition, because every time we turned around someone was saying that *We had no plan. Where is our plan? What are we doing? We have no plan.* You kept hearing that more and more, Mr. Speaker.

So we continue to do our work in the background. And we have our economic plan for recovery that we released today. And the Honourable Member, Michael Dunkley, who just finished speaking, Mr. Speaker, finished where he started, saying that he sees this recovery plan as a plan that is full of hope, wishful thinking and dreams, and one which we cannot recover from. I mean, one week you are slamming us because you say we do not have a plan. We give you a plan—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Honourable Member should listen closely. I never said *we cannot recover from*. I never said those words, so the Honourable Member should listen more closely and get his facts right.

The Speaker: Just clarify. Just clarifying for him. That is the main thing. You are fine.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You will know, Mr. Speaker. I am going to show you my pen. When the Members talk, I write. And the Honourable Member when he finished his speech he said he cannot see a recovery. So we can agree to disagree on that one. But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, Hansard will tell that story.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: When he talks—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: [INAUDIBLE] again. I proved him wrong before. And as he points his pen—

The Speaker: Now, hold on just a minute. Hold on just a minute. Let me acknowledge your point of order. What is your point of order now?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I will get the Hansard when it is available because I proved him wrong before in Hansard, and I will prove him wrong again.

The Speaker: Okay. All right. You have made your point.

Now we will let him continue on, and the Hansard will state the case when it is available.
MP.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will say this, Mr. Speaker. It is not too often I am wrong when it comes to me making notes of people's speech. And if I am, I duly apologise. But I tell you what. That Honourable Member, we have caught him out almost every week.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is not true. That is a big fabrication.

The Speaker: Members, let us stop going back and forth with each other, and let us get on with presenting your points, MP. You are losing most of your time on his points of order. So get to your point—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Stay on the line and we will be okay.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: [INAUDIBLE] speaking for itself.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Honourable Member will do a point of order on this

and say that he did not say that he saw no hope in this plan. And he thought that it was a lot of dreams in this plan. You see?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of order.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And maybe the same Member, Mr. Speaker, will also—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I will say exactly what I said at the end.

The Speaker: Hold on, Members. Hold on. Are you trying to make a point of order, MP?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Yes, I am.

The Speaker: Put your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I said, Mr. Speaker, that people cannot recover on hope. People cannot recover on dreams. People require opportunities. Those were my exact words. So maybe the Member's ink does not work in his pen, but that is what I said.

The Speaker: Thank you. As I said earlier, the Hansard will clarify everything. Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I mean, Mr. Speaker, think about it for a moment what the Honourable Member just said. Is it not the same thing? You see? But let me move on because he is trying to take up my time because he knows that some of the things he said, Mr. Speaker, are out there and are really uncalled for.

And that Honourable Member in particular, Mr. Dunkley, the former Premier of this country, is one in particular that called for plans or the lack of plans that this Government did not have. Time and time again, Mr. Speaker. So we give a plan by [who] I would say is one of the best Finance Ministers this country has ever seen. And then he contradicts himself. He says—and you can word it whichever way you want, Mr. Speaker, so that he feels good, whether it is, you know, he says he does not see where we can recover off of dreams, we cannot recover off of hope. [INAUDIBLE] Then he turns around and says, *Well, it's seven points*. But he agrees with some of them, but then he says he does not see any hope.

So you see? This is how he talks with a forked tongue. And if you listen carefully, you will see this throughout, and it happens every time we are in the House, Mr. Speaker. But this is a plan. And you know what? The Honourable Member went on to say, *Well, suppose we have a surge in COVID-19 cases? Well, you know, this does not make any sense*. So we make

a plan. And at least we have a plan, Mr. Speaker. We have hope, and we have dreams. And one thing about this Government, we are going to continue to try and give our people all of the hope and dreams that we can give them, Mr. Speaker, because I was called a dreamer at one stage in my life, too, Mr. Speaker.

But I would like it, whether it is sports and/or business. But I got past it, Mr. Speaker, because you know why? I believed. And I had dreams, and I had hope, and that is what this Government is going to try to give the people of this country. When we have hundreds and hundreds of people who are laid off from work, Mr. Speaker, and we give them the financial benefit to give them that lift. And hopefully that gives them hope, that is what we do as a caring Government. We have done it, and we will continue to do it, Mr. Speaker.

Now, some of these plans may not work out. But at least, you know what, Mr. Speaker? If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. *If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.* So we will try it, Mr. Speaker. And guess what? The old saying is, you know, the man gets knocked down, but I get up again. He gets knocked down, but I get up again. Mr. Speaker, we may do some things wrong and it may not quite work out. But we are going to keep trying because this Government was elected in the majority that we had because people believe in us. And we will continue to try to do the very best for the people of this country, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the bogeyman and the dark cloud that was cast today by several Members on the other side. We will not stand for it, Mr. Speaker. We are going to keep our shoulder to the wheel, and we are going to press on.

The Honourable Member Dunkley also talked about, you know, he does not see much in international business and hospitality. Well, Mr. Speaker, we had a contingent in Miami just this week trying to push international business, trying to push our FinTech, trying to push hospitality. Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Member Lawrence Scott, the Honourable Minister, gave a very articulate speech today about what he is doing. Honourable Member Wayne Furbert . . . Honourable Members have talked about what we are doing, what we have done, what we plan to do. We have been working hard, Mr. Speaker. It has not only been COVID-19 we have been dealing with, but in the background we have been looking at all of these other things that we know that this country is going to need going forward. And we are going to need everybody, everybody to assist, Mr. Speaker.

And when I hear the Honourable Member Cole Simons when he talked about, *Oh, we have to encourage international business and we have to encourage investors in this country*, and then his colleague, Vic Ball, gets in the paper almost weekly now preaching gloom-and-doom to the people of this country in the *Royal Gazette*, almost weekly. And he is the last person who should be making—well, he probably just puts his name to it, Mr. Speaker, and it is the OBA

consultants who are writing it for him. But we have to be subject to that kind of press as we are busting our tails to try to encourage international business and investment in this country, Mr. Speaker.

And I think we are getting there. We have Cambridge Beaches just been bought out, Mr. Speaker. Ariel Sands . . . the Honourable Member Dunkley, I remember him and former Minister [Michael] Fahy on a backhoe down at Ariel Sands. Let us ask him what happened there! But we are going to press on and see what we can do and try to help that project, too.

And, Mr. Speaker, let us not forget, right? They talk about St. Regis. Yes, we had some challenges with St. Regis in the beginning, as the Opposition should do. We should ask questions, and we did. But, Mr. Speaker, let us remember what really kick-started St. Regis is when *this* Government demolished that hotel that had stood there for 20-odd years. That was a big starter, Mr. Speaker. It certainly made life a lot easier for those who were coming in to look at that site. And yes, it is open, Mr. Speaker. And the OBA played their part in facilitating that development, Mr. Speaker, and we finished it off. And the Purroys and their family, their team, we have supported them wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker. And it is open. And we will support them more in the future.

We have also supported them with the purchase of St. George's Club. They have a plan to train our Bermudians in the hospitality industry. And we have supported them wholeheartedly. And that is the type of thing that we are doing in terms of . . . and you do not hear about it too much, Mr. Speaker. But there are things like that that we do in the background that are going to reap benefits for our people, especially those in St. George's and in the hospitality industry, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, this plan that we have we may have to tweak it. We may have some serious challenges with some of it. But at least we have a plan, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan. And I would just like to say *Congratulations!* to our Finance Minister, the Cabinet and the Members of caucus, Mr. Speaker. We are a team that contribute every week to everything that this Government does. So the hope that I would leave and the dreams I would leave for our people as I finish off tonight, Mr. Speaker, is, know one thing: that this Progressive Labour Party Government have you in mind. We will continue to keep you in mind, and we will continue to work for you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert, you have your 30 minutes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. Good evening, colleagues. I probably will not take all of my 30 minutes, but I did want to have the opportunity to speak to the Economic Recovery Plan that we do have.

And, yes, I am going to reiterate what MP De Silva had just mentioned in regard to a plan, and that, indeed, we have. And there were calls for a plan, Mr. Speaker. And not every country, not every jurisdiction has a plan, Mr. Speaker. But we, this Government, has taken the time to get a plan done. And interestingly enough, we had policies already in place that would complement this plan.

I just want to speak to this plan as the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors, because many persons—the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors would actually have a lot to do with wrap-around services and support services for persons when we are finding ourselves in difficult times such as food security, poverty, job losses. And so we will find people in difficult times, particularly during this period of COVID-19, which is why we had to come up with the national Economic Recovery Plan. And I just want to take this time to thank the third sector; as well as all of the helping agencies; and even Government, who has come forward with such programmes as the unemployment benefit, the supplementary employment benefit, financial assistance and the great deed that we did to help those persons who worked at the Southampton Princess at the time. These things that we did as a Government, Mr. Speaker, helped. They helped our people, and they helped us to maintain a level of recovery.

Anyone who knows me knows that I am a therapist by profession, occupational therapist by profession. And as an occupational therapist, I have had the opportunity to write treatment plans for people. And a plan would include . . . first, you know, you would include background information. You would include goals, objectives. But your plan would have a trajectory. It would have a period of time in which we would like to see something come into fruition. But what was most important with any treatment plan that you wrote, Mr. Speaker, was the persons who were involved in that plan. And they have to have had motivation. And they have to have had the desire to work and to work hard to see their plan come into fruition or to reach their goals and to reach their objectives, Mr. Speaker.

And I feel and I know the Progressive Labour Party has hard workers. And we have motivation to see this plan come into fruition. Now, I am not going to say that what is outlined in this plan is going to happen tomorrow or maybe months from now or maybe a

year from now. It actually outlines in the plan, if you have had the time to read it, that it is a trajectory period. You know, we hope to see recovery starting to come into play in 2023—between 2023 and 2025.

And so with all of the policies or policy initiatives, priority initiatives that we have listed, Bermuda, you are going to see your defined sorts of plans. You know, when we talk about launching a casino industry, we are working on this. And you are going to see more of this. When we talk about medical tourism, a medical tourism facility, we are working on a hard plan. You know, we have lots of research that is going into these policies. So you will see more of this. You are not going to see everything in this, all of the step-by-step procedures in this Economic Recovery Plan that we have in front of us today. But you will get them. And we will continue as a Government to work hard with great motivation to see these initiatives come into fruition.

I heard one of our colleagues already mention this evening about, *Well, in this Economic Recovery Plan we don't see anything as it relates to tourism or international business.* But we have a whole Bermuda Tourism Authority that was set up. Actually I just went online to do a quick search, and the Premier actually did an outlook forum with the Bermuda Tourism Authority, a recalibrate and recovery session for our tourism industry. So, you know, we are working towards these things.

The outcome of an Economic Recovery Plan is going to be contingent on how long we are in this economic downturn. And so as a Government we have already demonstrated that we are doing all that we can to try to get us out of this COVID-19, to try to eliminate the coronavirus in Bermuda or at least keep it to very low levels, because that will determine our economic success. We have made testing accessible. We have made vaccinations accessible. I mean, I am just looking at the vaccination centre flyer. You know, it is accessible. You know, there is availability. We have made it open. With the Close to Home initiative, with mobile vaccinations, we have made it accessible for our people. We want our people to know that we are very serious about getting out of COVID-19, which is a major contributor to where we are today.

Mr. Speaker, you know, sometimes we see plans, we write plans, and they are just words and we read them. And we have to remember that we are talking about people's lives, how the economic downturn has affected people's lives. Not having access to a job or not being able to work, you cannot make money to bring into the house to pay bills, to pay for food, these are real, real, real issues, and we have to think about people.

Again, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry does have to deal with wrap-around support services. And so it can be a very heavy Ministry. And we are talking about money to be able to assist people. But what I can say is that this Economic Recovery Plan, Mr. Speaker,

does address jobs. It addresses the youth employment strategy initiative, as we know one of the lowest age categories of persons who find themselves unemployed is between the ages of 18 and 26. And so I am sure that has been compounded with the economic downturn due to COVID-19. But this is an initiative that we are looking to address.

So this Economic Recovery Plan, Mr. Speaker, addresses . . . you know, we have mentioned the principles: reducing the cost of living, fairness and equity, providing or assisting more jobs for us in Bermuda . . . Economic protections are in there, Mr. Speaker. And so I just encourage everyone to take the opportunity to read this plan. And I am very proud of our Government for making sure that we were on the money with making sure that we did have an Economic Recovery Plan.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring to the attention of my colleagues an article that I came across, which was published in November of 2020. It talked about taking control and how we can unlock the economic recovery. And what it spoke to was a number of recommendations that governments should focus on with an Economic Recovery Plan. And, Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me to just highlight what some of these recommendations were . . .

[No audible response]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the first recommendation for governments was to make sure that [they] have proper leadership. We must display decisive leadership. And I think we have been very decisive in demonstrating the protection of our people, in demonstrating clear and decisive action.

Our Premier, our Minister of Health have been in the forefront particularly as we go through COVID-19. And they have been leading weekly meetings, bi-weekly meetings, meeting all throughout the days, all throughout different hours. They have been meeting, meeting, meeting with contentment, with motivation, with commitment. And so not just our Premier and our Minister of Health, even though they are in the forefront, our other Ministers as well have been working diligently to make sure that we try to fulfil objectives and goals to the best of our ability. So one of those recommendations was leadership. And, Bermuda, you have good leadership.

Another objective, Mr. Speaker, was that we set prioritised agendas and that countries should have a national Economic Recovery Plan. And so here is the Economic Recovery Plan, Mr. Speaker.

Another point that they raised in this article was personnel. And here, you know, others have mentioned our essential workers and what they have done for us particularly during this period of COVID-19. And they have done an extremely, extremely difficult job. And we have all thanked them along the way. But, we cannot say *thank you* enough. This team has

led us through this health crisis, and they have commended structures. I remember one time seeing a chart of structures that the Ministry of Health did, making sure that we covered every area within Health through this COVID-19. And people went out and they did due diligence for the people of this country, making sure that we empower people with the appropriate skill sets. The call centre, the testing centre, the vaccination centre, people are being trained for this. They are being trained. We are not taking this lightly, *Just go up there and do your job*; we are training people for this and making sure people have the appropriate skill sets.

This paper, Mr. Speaker, also speaks about structures and making sure that we have structures and systems in place, that we are being data-driven. The Economic Recovery Plan gives us data. We have been sharing data all along. Particularly as it relates to the COVID-19, we have been sharing data. And this Economic Recovery Plan, if you read it, Mr. Speaker, you will see that there are data in there to make sure that our decisions, our policies, our initiatives that we make are transparent. And it also gives the Bermudian public something to hold us accountable for.

Also, with our systems is proactively communicating Government initiatives and progress. And that is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. We are constantly providing opportunities to communicate with Government, and Government is constantly giving out information on our initiatives and progress. So, Bermuda, you do not have to worry or fret that some of these policies that we have talked about today that you are not going to get information about them and they are not going to be further developed, because they will. And you will know about them, and you will hear about them. While we may not be able to get through all of them throughout our total trajectory, it is a plan, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to working alongside my colleagues so that we reach these policy initiatives and priority initiatives so that we can see an economic—not downturn, but an upturn, Mr. Speaker. That is what we want for our people. That is what we want for our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Adams. How are you this evening, sir?

Mr. Jache Adams: I am pretty good, sir. I am feeling good.

The Speaker: Good. You have your 30 minutes.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I hope that you noticed that, as the Minister of Sport and Premier said that cricket was about to start, in hopes of a good Cup Match I decided to—

The Speaker: Well, I see you are wearing your red-and-blue, so it is good that you are representing the West End of the Island because I know your father wanted you to wear your red-and-blues.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, you know I am Somerset through and through.

The Speaker: Very good. All right. I grew up nearby Somerset. I know who your father is. Okay. All right.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I am going to start by saying that I am a bit confused and disappointed. And I will tell you why.

I am first confused. I am confused because there was an Honourable Member who spoke previously and questioned whether or not the Economic Recovery Plan considered international business. So I am confused, because in the document, as well as the Minister spoke about earlier (and I quote), he said, “In parallel to the ERP, it is important to highlight that Bermuda will also continue to move forward with . . . additional government initiatives to support the vibrancy of Bermuda’s international business sector.” I emphasise that because this Government is always, and has always, recognised the value that international business plays on our economy. And those sorts of initiatives run in parallel to the Economic Recovery Plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed because I heard previously the Opposition Leader say that his opinion on this Economic Recovery Plan was that it was not in a position for the everyday Bermudian to understand. The reason why I am disappointed is because it becomes quite obvious to me that he continues to underestimate the intelligence of the everyday Bermudian because there is nothing in this Economic Recovery Plan that I believe the average Bermudian cannot understand.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am reminded and I will say that I will always remember the African proverb that says, “For tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” So with that, I congratulate the Finance Minister for tabling this timely Economic Recovery Plan, a plan that says to the country that we can debate at great length the events which led us to this point economically. But at the end of the day, we are who we are, and here is the Government’s plan to address it head-on.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a part of a Government that is not here to make excuses or wallow in the negativity, but instead has kept its head

down working for the people of Bermuda, working on a strategy and a path forward to stabilise our economy, return to a balanced budget, begin repaying our national debt, increase jobs and build a nation of owners. Mr. Speaker, this plan is the Government’s way of preparing for tomorrow today.

Mr. Speaker, I will re-emphasise the point that the Economic Recovery Plan was a collaborative effort. The Cabinet team, government technical officers and other key external stakeholders contributed with the sole purpose of producing the best recovery plan possible. If there is one thing we all can agree on, it is that we all want what is best for Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, working with stakeholders is important because it allows us to listen to other perspectives, combine our strength and best prepare for scenarios we may not have considered. This Government recognises that we will reach our destination faster when we are rowing together in the same direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question then becomes, Where is our destination? What direction are we headed in? And when we look at the Economic Recovery Plan, we see seven key themes, the first being diversifying our economy. Mr. Speaker, any investment advisor would tell you the importance of diversifying your portfolio. The saying, *Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket* comes to mind, and in Bermuda’s case we have managed to put many of our eggs in two baskets, namely, IB and tourism. So it is time to focus on introducing industries whilst continuing to foster a healthy environment for the existing ones. And so, as my colleagues mentioned, the plan is to establish and develop industries such as FinTech, gaming, vertical farming, medical tourism and others and have them contribute to our economy as well.

Number two is making financial markets work better for Bermudians. Mr. Speaker, if I had my way, I would have this as number one. There are too many of these companies profiting off of everyday hard-working Bermudians. And so we are focused on tasks such as increasing competition in this country, reducing interest rates and establishing a digital bank that will be owned by Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, I heard an Honourable Member previously question whether a digital bank was the answer. However, that Member has no idea about the scope and plan for the Bermuda National Digital Bank. And so I am baffled as to how anyone could question something they know nothing about. (But I digress.) Mr. Speaker, for far too long, too many Bermudians in this particular industry have just been looked at as employees and customers. Mr. Speaker, Bermudians will have an opportunity to now own their own bank.

Number three is building new, and enhancing existing, infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, it is critical for the future growth and development of this country that we continue to invest in infrastructure, continue to invest in opportunities that will increase efficiency, continue to invest in enhancing the lives of Bermudians. A new

waste and water management facility is a great example of an opportunity where modern advancement has made our current facility antiquated. And this Government will look to make the investment necessary that will prove beneficial in both the short, medium and long term.

Number four is expanding Bermuda's resident population. Mr. Speaker, imagine a situation where a group of people get together to lift a heavy rock over their heads, and one by one a person lifting leaves, thereby making the rock increasingly heavier for those still lifting it. So, when considering our economy and the country, we are at a point where we need to put policies in place that will encourage more lifters. Our aim with initiatives such as the economic investment certificates and others is to increase our population so that we ease the tax burden on our residents and introduce more contributors. Number five is labour market reform. Mr. Speaker, we are a Labour Government through and through. And we will continue to keep the best interests of all of the workers of Bermuda at heart. By establishing a national jobs strategy and youth employment strategy, we look to reduce and prevent unemployment in Bermuda while increasing training opportunities as well.

Number six is reforming the delivery of health care. Mr. Speaker, as I canvass and speak to Bermudians regularly, it becomes clear that health care reform in this country is paramount. And so this Government will continue to look for ways to reduce the cost of health care in this country and introduce a universal health care system which ensures that everyone in Bermuda can access the basic health care they need.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, number seven is developing legal and regulatory frameworks that foster innovation. Mr. Speaker, Darwin said that it is not the strongest or most intelligent that survives, but the one that is most adaptable to change. So as we lay out a vision for this country in an ever-changing ever-evolving world, not only is our focus to be adaptable and innovative ourselves, but also to become the centre of innovation. We have an opportunity to tell the world's thought leaders and outside-the-box thinkers that Bermuda is the best environment to develop and test your ideas. And so we will continue to push forward with initiatives such as the energy regulatory sandbox and encourage FinTech and digital asset players to innovate on this Island.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that you know that there is more to a plan than a list of initiatives and themes. And so the Economic Recovery Plan also includes measurable targets, targets aimed to evaluate the progress and success of those initiatives. So through this plan we project to return to a balanced budget by fiscal year 2023/24. The successful implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan should also see growth by 1.3 [per cent] to 1.5 per cent per annum above our baseline historical level of 1.0 per cent. We

aim to have a gross-debt-to-GDP ratio that does not exceed 55 per cent and net-debt-to-GDP that does not exceed 50 per cent. We maintain that we have no intention of increasing the debt ceiling and will also focus to ensure debt-service-to-revenue and gross-debt-to-revenue ratios trend downward as well. Measurable targets, Mr. Speaker—a key component of our commitment to transparency.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of transparency, this plan then goes a step further by including a form of accountability by illustrating the governing structure and identifying the Ministry that owns the task. The Economic Recovery Plan lists those responsible for seeing the initiative through, and I would like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone . . . anyone interested in getting involved, learning more about a particular task or has suggestions of improvement should reach out to those responsible. If you want to know more about the medical tourism facility, reach out to the Ministry of the Cabinet Office. If you want to get involved in the national jobs strategy, reach out to the Ministry of Labour. If you have suggestions regarding the cannabis regulatory regime, contact the Attorney General's Chambers. This goes back to my earlier point, Mr. Speaker, of a collaborative effort.

Mr. Speaker, I will end by acknowledging that a strategic plan means nothing without proper execution. While the Economic Recovery Plan is a critical first step, we understand that the people of Bermuda elected us on our ability to execute, produce results and impact the lives for the betterment of our people. And that is precisely why our goal is to move this country past the pandemic. We have an Economic Recovery Plan with specific aims and tasks, with measurable targets and timelines. But it will all be for naught if we continue to spend so much of our time, energy and resources on handling COVID-19. So again I thank the Minister and his team for putting forth a blueprint. And I, along with my other colleagues, now commit to executing effectively. Thank you.

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Adams.

Are there any further speakers?

An Hon. Member: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. That sounds like Famous from out there in northwest.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How are you?

The Deputy Speaker: Very well, sir. Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Can you hear me well?

The Deputy Speaker: Very well, sir. You sound like a St. George's fan. Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right. My video may or may not cut out. But I just want to put some things in real quick.

I heard the OBA criticising our Economic Recovery Plan. But let us just go over the OBA's economic strategy. Give money to Aecon, check. Give money to Morgan's Point, check. Give money to Cross Island, check. Cut money from schools, check. Cut money from the workers, check. Cut money from seniors, check. That was the OBA's strategy. There is this narrative, Mr. Speaker, that is, *Let's call a spade for what a spade is*. This is the overwhelming narrative that Black people cannot manage money, that a Black government cannot manage money, that unionised workers should not have a say in the economic prosperity of this Island. That is the narrative, Mr. Speaker. Let us call it for what it is.

I listened to the verbiage from the Honourable Member from constituency 10. It is the continuation of that narrative. Now, I cannot articulate as well as the Honourable Member who just spoke before me, so I am going to keep it real short. Prior to COVID-19 we had closed the gap on the deficit without laying off workers, without cutting money for seniors, without cutting money from schools. As a matter of fact, we gave the schools more money. But we were still able to close down the deficit. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We were about to pay down on the debt.

Then comes along Morgan's Point. And the Honourable Finance Minister has to find \$200 million to pay that, increasing our debt from \$2.5 billion to \$2.7 billion. Then comes along COVID-19. And we have got to pay for that. But on top of that, we have got to pay out \$20 million to Aecon. Why? Because of the OBA's economic plan. Their plan was to give the rich more money, and that is exactly what has happened.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am just going to speak briefly on the Ministry that I am attached to. The Honourable Deputy Premier spoke about some points, and let me just reiterate. We have a space strategy to make money—yes, money from off of space, satellites. We have a strategy to make money from subsea cables, underground cables. We have money coming in for the green fund. That green fund—let me be clear—that is not a fund for the green party; that is a fund for green energy that is going to create jobs. We have to, no, I will not say *get away from* fossil fuel, but we have to find backup just in case. But all of that takes money. And we also have money coming in, or we have a plan for the blue economy. That might be the blue-and-blue economy in a couple of weeks, but for the blue economy.

So here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I am not going to elaborate much longer. But let us compare the two strategies. We do not have any strategy for giving away money to rich people with hopes that we might get a couple of dollars come back. That was the OBA's strategy. Our strategy is to empower our people and, as the Honourable Lawrence Scott said, to inspire people to start their own businesses, because the days of our relying on others to give us a job have come to an end.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is all I have to say. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Famous.

Are there any further speakers? Any further speakers?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Sounds like the Honourable Member Weeks.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: You have the floor, Mr. Weeks.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Deputy. How are you tonight?

The Deputy Speaker: Very well indeed.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Okay, Mr. Deputy. I would like to start off my remarks by saying in the midst of this global pandemic we have leaders, strong leadership. Up until 15 months ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Government was on a good track. They were doing what was right for our people, trying to get our people back to work and do legislation to ensure that our country moves forward. Some of us would have you believe, Mr. Deputy, that the Government started or that life started 13 or 14 months ago.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: But our Government was actually doing some good stuff before then.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since this pandemic has gripped us and globally gripped the world, we have needed strong and courageous leadership. We needed somebody to be innovative and able to think outside the box, actually being able to reset the dial if you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we must take our hats off to the Premier and his team. You know, we have made a few missteps, but that is all being accepted when something is dropped in your lap that you did not see coming. But they have done a good job, and we have done a good job in supporting them.

My remarks tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are mainly going to be on the Ministry that I am attached to, the Ministry of Labour. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard a speaker before me speaking about, *We have not been focused on international business*. I could not believe my ears, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is all we seem to focus on, international business. But this Government now is saying, *What about Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda?* And hence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the initiatives that the Labour Ministry have put in place are doing just that. They are doing some things that are courageous, in my opinion. Because immigration, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is always the topic that we have to look at and tread lightly on because even though we need bodies in Bermuda, we need revenue, we cannot do any of that if we do not first see how it affects Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda, in my opinion. And some of these initiatives by our Labour Government are doing that.

So, one of the initiatives of Labour is the investment certificate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is to try to stimulate our economy, to try and have people come here because we need bodies on the ground. And this time where we are competing internationally because everybody is going through this global situation and they are trying to stimulate their economy, we have to sell what we used to sell for the last 50 years, and that is the beauty of the country and the beauty of our people.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: And in order to get people to come here, to believe in our product, we have to put the people out there. We have to show our country to be safe, we have to show our country to be welcoming. And the natural beauty of ours is another good thing that can help to entice people to come to Bermuda, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So in saying that, one of the things that I notice, because I am very much involved in charities . . . one of the things that I take my hat off to the Minister and Ministry of Labour, Mr. Deputy, is that one of the criteria was for them, for whoever bought or received a certificate would have to invest in a charity. Mr. Deputy Speaker, since I am in the charity field now over the last 12 months, I know that this pandemic . . . we do not talk about it much, but this pandemic has affected the charitable sector on our Island. Most of the charity goes to the underemployed, unemployed, the homeless and the like. So I was excited, got to be excited when I saw that one of the criteria was an investment in a charity. Because our food banks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could definitely use an influx of some charitable love from whichever sector that it could come from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, moving on. The Ministry of Labour again shows their commitment to trying to balance their portfolio by having the closed-door cate-

gories. And that is to put the Bermudian at a level playing field, or a better playing field, and the work permit holders would have to take second place, so to speak, when it comes to these closed-door categories. So again for those naysayers, this Labour Ministry is doing its part in helping our country get back where it should be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the youth employment strategy is also an initiative of the Ministry of Labour. That is to get our youngsters employed, get them trained and retrained, and prepared for our economy when it picks up. So that is another initiative of the Labour Ministry. One other initiative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am very much in favour of is the minimum and living wage. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this initiative is long overdue. And I know that we have just scratched the surface because there is a lot of work to be done to satisfy the needs of our people. But we have come a long way. We have come a long way in doing what we can to make sure that whatever happens with moving our country forward or opening our country up [is] to keep Mr. and Mrs. Smith firmly in mind.

And that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a commitment by this Labour Government to make it known that we are interested in international business, bringing bodies here, helping our revenue to increase, but not at the expense of Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda. And for that I take my hat off to the Labour Minister and his team.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I could move on real quick to some grants, something that the Premier has been doing that has not been getting much credit. But I want to take the time now to acknowledge it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year the Premier has been giving grants to our workmen and our sporting clubs. You may know because the team that wears red and white got a nice little bit, you know. So they too, along with several other clubs, have gotten a nice little bit.

And once that is done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my humble opinion being a member of these sporting and workmen's environment, that has helped to create jobs in itself. It has helped to do those little small projects that could stimulate our tradesmen, that they could come and they could help to do some small projects that they have been wanting to do. So hats-off to the Premier for doing that. It is not something that is always acknowledged, but it goes a long way when you talk to the man on the street and you talk to those people in the workmen's clubs and the sporting clubs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another Ministry that I am attached to is the Transport Ministry. I cannot wax as lyrical as the current Transport Minister, as he knows how to put things in perspective, but I will try. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard him talking earlier about when you walk down Front Street, look to your right, depending on which way you are going, or left. Driving down Harbour Road, look. And you see in the harbour a home for these boats. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I smiled

at that because this morning when I was out on my morning walk with my wife, we were on Front Street. And we saw these Viking's [cruise ships]. And when I looked and saw it, the first thing that came to mind that early in the morning was *jobs*. Jobs! Jobs for our people.

It was a welcome sight to see our harbour hosting the Viking ships. And I am looking forward to more of that because everything that came to my mind seeing that ship was, taxes, working, other modes of transportation, tours, our hotels, because I believe coming and going the passengers have to use our hotels and our restaurants. So that homeporting initiative has definitely been able to, or is able to, touch on a lot of sectors of our society. So I look forward to that happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also, the Transport Minister talked about the new different routes to get or stay connected to various people in our country—i.e., the Indians, the Filipinos. We have already started our charter with Portugal. But I would like to add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we cannot forget the growing segment of our society, and that is the worker from Africa. More and more Africans are coming to Bermuda. I must say they are coming in a professional capacity. So while we are looking at tourism and connecting different routes, now is the time, while we reset the dial, to look at a route to Africa, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Culturally, you know, we can definitely connect with them. And I do agree with Portugal and India and the Philippines, and whatnot. I am not saying that that is not what we should do; I agree with that. But I think that we should add Africa to the routes that we are looking to expand our tourism product to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I close—see, I am not going to talk long—I just wanted to touch on a few points. As I close, I want to take my hat off to what the Government has been doing, our Labour Minister, in particular, our Transport Minister. The Finance Minister has been doing a remarkable job. The Premier has been doing a remarkable job leading the charge.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Weeks.

Are there any further speakers? Is that the Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Mr. Premier.

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

I am grateful to join this debate today. And certainly there have been a number of capable contributions from Members on this side, certainly from not

only our capable front bench, but also our capable back bench. And they have spoken about the difference in approaches between our Government and the former Government. They have spoken about how they put this plan together, spoke about how multifaceted this particular plan is. And I am very grateful for the work of the Government teams who played a part in putting the plan together and certainly thankful to the Minister of Finance and his team in the Ministry of Finance who coordinated this effort. It was an all-of-government effort, as you would have heard from what many Ministers who have already spoken have spoken about the work, the analysis that went into place.

There certainly was a lot of energy that was expended to pick out the top 31 items of over 80 items that were proposed and considered. And it is important to note that these were analysed to see which would work best. And they were analysed between what was the most complex thing to implement, what were the things that would cost the most to implement, what would the economic impact be insofar as jobs and economic improvements and contribution to GDP. And that is the reason why we ended up with the particular items which are outlined inside of the Economic Recovery Plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have been able to listen in on a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I certainly have heard some comments from some Members of the Opposition. And some of the things that they were saying were that, *Oh, we don't see this*, or *Oh, we don't see that*, or, *What about this?* This is not a political document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we are trying to be all things to all people. That is not what this is about. This is not about saying, *Oh, the Government's economic plan has this in it, this in it, so that is good*. We are being realistic as we are constrained by finances. And I heard Honourable Members speak earlier about Morgan's Point, that it would have been great to have an extra \$200 million to throw behind the Economic Recovery Plan and some of these initiatives. But the fact is that we do not have that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, in looking at and structuring this plan, we structured this plan understanding the economic shock that the coronavirus could bring to our economy, recognising where we stood in regard to the things of which we were forced to pay for, such as Morgan's Point, and understanding a trajectory to make sure that we did not fall into the debt trap and we can sufficiently make sure that we added growth to our economy so that we can begin or get back to where we were prior to the pandemic, where we were about to be to a place where our debt was going to be going down instead of going up. And so the truth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we cannot throw it all out there. And we need to be focused on our approach.

But I think there is also something that is very important for the listening audience and Honourable Members to take in. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will

admit that I have not been able to hear all of the debate. I have had to certainly step out for some meetings. But it is important to recognise that it is important for us to focus not solely on what we do well, but it is also important to make sure that we look at doing things differently. And diversification of the economy is key. It is something that we speak about often, but it is key. And this plan is a good plan and a sound plan. But what is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the economic terms and we speak about an Economic Recovery Plan, is that this plan is not just focused on items that will benefit business. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is if we fix the economy and we fix and we take care of those who *have* and we do not focus on the very important issues such as affordable housing, such as universal health care and such as lowering the price of food, then we have a challenge inside of our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to repeat that again because this Economic Recovery Plan is not just focused on business. This is not the One Bermuda Alliance's economic recovery plan. And we will not recover the country if we are focused solely on business. This is the Progressive Labour Party Economic Recovery Plan as we know that there are kitchen-table issues that must be dealt with and cannot be ignored.

When we talk about . . . and the Minister of Public Works will speak to the issues of affordable housing, the additional funds that are going to be put into affordable housing in the execution of the Economic Recovery Plan so we can provide that relief. The work of which we are going to be doing with improved residential schemes which will tie into that very nicely, provide even more affordable housing.

When we talk about what the Minister of Health is doing on the reform of our health care system, making sure that we make universal health care available and affordable to persons, those are things that are important. And certainly the work of which the Minister for the Cabinet Office spoke about when it comes to the kitchen-table issues about the reducing of the price of food. We hear a lot of comments about, *Oh, what are we going to do with vertical farms* and *Oh, what about this?* and *What about that?* But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we keep doing what we have been doing in the past, we will keep getting what we have been getting. And if there is one thing that this Government has been able to demonstrate is that we will not be afraid to take risks and be bold, and to move forward with initiatives that may not actually pay off in one week or two weeks, or one year, but will yield the long-term end and the long-term economic recovery. Because that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what is important.

I also heard some comments about the lack of details. This is a significant document, and this is a summary document behind the larger-scale Economic Recovery Plan which was produced. But it is important to note that out of the 31 options or primary

initiatives that were outlined here, some of them have already been delivered. So we are not waiting for this debate or other matters to move forward on these initiatives, as Ministers and Ministries are continuing to press ahead. But what is also recognised in the summary report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we need to make sure that we execute and deliver. And it is difficult when you are dealing with the regular functions of government and we have to recognise that the public service is far less staffed than it used to be, which means that there are key matters of service delivery that have to be addressed which makes it difficult to focus and to put mind and energy to things which are not necessarily top of mind, but that are outside of the actual service delivery that needs to take place on a day-to-day basis in government.

And a plan without a plan for execution will not be successful. That is the reason why this Economic Recovery Plan has outlined the structure to make sure that we can advance and execute these items. Truth is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did give a Ministerial Statement when we were here in the budget session speaking about the setting up of the Economic Recovery Plan Project Management Office. And I will be honest, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Over the last two months we have been dealing with a deadly spike in the coronavirus. And sadly, the timeline for the implementation of the Project Management Office has slipped.

However, that much being said, we have determined an approach that will match the private and public sector tally in the staffing of this office that will certainly further the interests of this country and lead the implementation of the things which are outlined in this Economic Recovery Plan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, private sector partners have engaged, and we will shortly confirm a senior public service lead in addition with the private sector partnering. The benefit of seeking private sector assistance is, as I said, in many cases there are existing resources that are engaged in this very economic recovery work. There is work that is already taking place on behalf of Government in other jurisdictions. And it is important that we do not re-invent the wheel, and that we match talents that will provide the Government with the opportunity not only to capitalise on expertise, but also to build capacity within the public service.

So it is important for me to outline, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are not just bringing in people to run in to operate this and the persons who are leading. We are bringing a mix of having public sector persons having university grant lists who may be new who could form a part of this team, in addition to skilled public service officers who know and can understand and can navigate the public service, to form a core team to drive these initiatives forward. And it is a view that the Project Management Office will be staffed during this month with a full engagement that will commence in July.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were some items as well that we heard (before I get to the specific points which I am meant to cover) about low-hanging fruit. And I think that it is important that we remember where this Economic Recovery Plan came from. And I am sure the Minister of Finance prefaced this earlier, but last year we did go through an exercise bringing together multiple sectors of the country—the economy of the country, the social partners of the country—and dealt with a significant number of low-hanging-fruit issues. And as I have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of these things that are outlined here have already been executed.

But what this economy does not need is short-term fixes. We must make sure that we are taking this unique opportunity to redesign how our economy works. And there is no doubt when speaking about issues of affordable housing, speaking about issues of the Economic Recovery Plan, speaking about issues of lowering the cost of food, speaking about issues of which have been highlighted here by the Minister of Labour on immigration reform on how we change those things, investing more in our workforce, that those are long-term investments which are necessary to have a long-term plan that will yield benefits.

And I want to make sure I am clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because the view is—and I want to put persons on notice, especially persons in the Opposition—when they speak about, *Oh! Well, this plan has no immediate benefits in six months . . .* it is not meant to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is not what this is about. And the challenge of which we have is short-term thinking. Things like the America's Cup, a one-time boost, do not lead to long-term success. And we have done a lot of short-term items, and we need to make sure that we are focused on long-term planning, things that will actually make a difference in 5 years, in 10 years, in 15 years, executing on a long-term Economic Recovery Plan and executing on a long-term strategy that will grow our GDP over time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I say that because I remember the attacks on the Government for their pursuit of FinTech. We do not hear those attacks anymore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we laid out a strategy. We are executing a strategy, and we know that it is bringing jobs and economic opportunity and investment to the country. And that continues. And the silence which we are hearing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because we know that it is working and the Opposition knows that it is working. So I need to caution us all not to be solely focused on the quick wins. It is to make sure that we are doing the work so these things are sustainable in the long term so the changes and the impacts that are made are helpful to our citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now what I would say is that there are specific items underneath here which fall underneath my remit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are a number of things such as the Bermuda Economic Development

Corporation speaking about the Uptown Development Authority, which work is progressing on. And it will be in place before the summer, seeded with \$1 million to jumpstart the development of an approved residential scheme in North East Hamilton. When it comes to approved residential schemes in North East Hamilton, Mr. Deputy Speaker, soon the House will consider the North East Hamilton Plan, which has been done with the consultation between the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Planning. And the things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which are in there will revolutionise what we are going to do in North East Hamilton.

There is also the discussion in this plan about the expansion of the EEZ for South East Hamilton as well. And that is something that will be coming to the House most likely in the next session because it is important that we handle that as well.

Another thing that was under the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the small-to-medium enterprise marketplace. Now, that is something which is particularly important as we talk about, how do we get our small businesses ready for the future? This is something that is in train, and it is something that will be launched next month. And we are proud of the work that has been done. It is being done by a local development company, Code 441 with Mr. Jahde Eve, working in conjunction with Bermuda Economic Development Corporation to provide for goods and services to easily sell products online and to sell them not only for the domestic audience, but also to a global audience, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is the work of which we are engaging.

Another item which is underneath here which falls underneath my remit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, speaks to the casino industry. And work continues certainly to get this ready, and I am confident that we will have a casino open this year. It is key, and it is critical as we go ahead and move these things forward. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it speaks very clearly to the fact that you have to make sure you have a long-term plan. There was great fanfare six years ago when the former Government passed the Casino Gaming Act. But they were unable to complete the work which needed to be done. And I think that it is an important example of why we need to have long-term planning that works, which considers all available options, considers what is necessary to ensure that these things succeed and put them together, because we can speak to the same thing that happened with FinTech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, we have been able to address that by working with other overseas banks and other things, and in other agencies, to make sure that we are actually developing FinTech in Bermuda and FinTech jobs. So I am certain that we will have a casino open this year.

One of the things that also falls underneath my remit is the support to the small and medium en-

terprises. We certainly had an exchange on Parliamentary Questions earlier, so we know where we are going. We know the support that we have been given, and we also know the red tape that we are getting rid of and the work that we will do to further reduce barriers for products.

There will be changes to the Bermuda Economic Development Act, the changes to the Act that governs the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation. There will be further changes. There will be further breaks that will be given to start-up businesses to make it easier. We will be implementing items that are there regarding the one-stop shopping to make sure it is easier for entrepreneurs to go ahead and start, and to make permanent certain tax breaks for start-up companies to make sure that they can get their businesses off the ground, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The final item which I will speak to is the Bermuda National Digital Bank. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will be aware that this was the number one item inside of the Progressive Labour Party's election manifesto. And it is a key and critical initiative. As has already been reported, there was a contract that was given to develop the work for the Bermuda National Digital Bank. Persons were engaged to put together a business plan. That process continues. We have received two drafts of that business plan. The time of delivery of that business plan is the end of the month of June. At that point in time, we will go to Cabinet and outline the next steps. I am grateful that I will be able to update this Honourable House on the progress of that initiative prior to this House rising for the summer, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the work is certainly progressing. And what is important in this is that we are taking a deliberate approach and we are actually examining all of the possible options. There have been numerous consultations which have been done with the local industry. We are speaking to the trade unions, we are speaking to the existing banks, new banks which are looking to enter the market to understand the problems that exist. And there are significant issues of which we identify.

But what is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this fits in with the other items of which were mentioned earlier. When we are talking about dealing [with] and tackling the cost of living and the cost of doing business in this country, whether it is affordable housing, whether it is universal health care, whether it is the cost of food or whether it is the cost of foreign access to capital, or also the cost of mortgages in this country which is far and above what we find in other countries—Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom or many other places. And it is always back to development and delivery. If we can reduce mortgage rates in this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, think of what that does for affordability. Think of what that does to allow more persons to get on the housing lad-

der to stimulate investment and improve residential schemes and others.

But that is the reason why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about working and looking at this plan in its entirety, not just quick wins. And all of these things were studied when we put this together, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will say that we are proud of this plan as a Government. It does not only deal with business, but it also deals with the long-term changes which are necessary for our social fabric in order to ensure that our economy and our country can survive, as the world is changing very quickly. The coronavirus and this pandemic presented an opportunity, and countries that do not seize the opportunity to make sure that they can transform their economy, recognising the challenges which have been exposed and inequalities which have been exposed in this pandemic, will ultimately fail in the long run. And this Government is committed to not making that mistake.

And if Members read this plan, if the country reads this plan, they will know that the Government is focused not only on business, but also on social conditions. And I hope that this Honourable House will support this plan today and have unanimous support. And we will work to enhance this issue so that we can bring economic growth and prosperity to our people, but also make sure we tackle those issues of affordable housing, such universal health care and such as the cost of food in new innovative ways to actually deliver on those promises.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, the Honourable Premier.

Any further speakers? I see the Honourable Minister Colonel Burch.

You have the floor.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Economic Recovery Plan highlights two areas for the Ministry of Public Works, they being infrastructure investment and the upgrade to the water and wastewater treatment facility. And they continue to increase the stock of affordable housing for the country.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not speak about the Boaz Island Village infrastructure improvements that concluded this week, nor will I speak about the \$13 million stimulus programme that is well underway and employing young Bermudians, nor will I speak about the BELCO trenching project that you cannot go to a parish in the country where there is not a trench. I will speak about the two that are listed in the programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But let me also say that that is not all we are doing, and those activities will come out in due course.

I am going to do housing first, because I guess if anyone listened to the budget presentation this year, where there were significant cuts in budget allocations across the government to reflect the economic climate in which we are in, at that stage I indicated that there was no funding for affordable housing, but that I would not surrender in terms of trying to find a way to add to the stimulus programme so that we could provide some housing for our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been at least a decade since the Government has provided and added to the housing inventory stock. It is almost like *déjà vu* because about 16 years ago we were in the same boat when we first came to Government. And there had not been any investment in inventory. And so it makes it very difficult to tell people who are in need of housing. We are at the stage where the Ministry of Finance is considering and has indicated that we would get something. We do not know what that is at the moment, but I am hoping it is the significant amounts of money that I have asked for that will provide us with the ability to renovate 24 units of various sizes across the country, or some permutation of that, depending on the money that we get.

I will say though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we did not sit idle. Having not had funding to provide for housing, we have gone on a new campaign at the Housing Corporation in terms of speaking to contractors and inviting them to renovate properties at their own expense and be reimbursed over time once the units have been rented. This project has seen half-a-dozen houses being done under that basis. There has been an increased interest in doing that. And so we will continue in that vein irrespective of the amounts of money that we will get from the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that most of my political involvement has included responsibility for the Bermuda Housing Corporation. It is one of the most fulfilling and gratifying jobs that I think anyone can have to provide a family with a new home and a new adequate home. That is the mantra that the [Bermuda Housing] Corporation [INAUDIBLE] has had for the last 12, 13 years now, of providing adequate housing to Bermudians as opposed to what they can afford and making it so that they can afford adequate housing.

We take the view that to do that eliminates a lot of social problems later on. When you warehouse people, they act like they have been warehoused. When you house them properly, they rise to that occasion and become responsible, contributing citizens to the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on ad infinitum about the water and wastewater master plan, but I am not going to do that. What I am going to do is talk a little bit about where we have come from and where we are at the moment and what the outlook is going forward. This is a programme that has

been on the agenda of the Government I believe before we came to Government.

And so the Water Section in the Ministry is headed by a principal and water engineer, Tarik Christopher. I met him about 16 years ago as a trainee in this Ministry. And when I met him, I said to him after about 15 minutes that I had never met anybody who got more excited about water and its development and delivery than he [did]. And he still has that excitement. Encouraged by his behaviour and conduct makes my job so much more pleasant, and anybody who sits in this job, to have a young Bermudian who leads a team of Bermudians who are committed and dedicated and knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and everything positive you can imagine in terms of delivering on their responsibility.

So he and his team have provided a water and wastewater master plan for the entire Island. Obviously, we cannot afford that, and obviously you want to try and take off small bites and have some successes. So we decided that we would focus on St. George's and Southside, primarily, both for the same reason. Their infrastructure is collapsing around them, and they have customers who are not happy when that happens. And none of us would be happy if we had no water. And so they have come out with a plan. We are well underway now. We started about six months ago in baby steps at Southside in terms of purchasing supplies and materials while we worked on the full plan for St. George's that would include providing services to the new St. Regis Hotel, as well as to the customers whom we have in St. George's at the moment, as well as the St. George's Hotel.

The biggest and most exciting aspect of this from my personal point of view (and I think every Bermudian's point of view, Mr. Deputy Speaker), is that by the end of this year, all things going according to plan, we will cease pumping raw sewage off Tobacco Bay. That day I will make a red-letter day because it will put us on the path to remove the second and last area where we do that. And that is in the City of Hamilton off of South Shore. But it is something that we have worked on. We have issued so far 13 tenders, people who are in the East.

Not many of us would travel on Stokes Point Road, but it is all dug up and just about ready to come onto the main road to proceed from there to Mullet Bay. We have tendered this out for the Stokes Point water crossing, which started last week, which is going from the Southside end across to Stokes Point to join what is being done there.

We have a contract out for Fort Victoria to St. Regis that actually is completed, and the St. Regis is online on the system on that side. And we have a contract from York Street to Fort Victoria, a contract from Echo Lane to Mullet Bay Park; from Mullet Bay Park to Tiger Bay Lift Station on Wellington Street; Tiger Bay Lift Station through St. George's Club via Rose Hill. A sewer force main for Southside is out for ten-

der. A new sewage plant is on the way for Southside that will be able to accommodate the increase in effluence.

A potable and reclaimed water transfer network for Southside is shortly to go out to tender. The relocation of the Botanical Gardens tank to Fort Victoria, that is in process. It requires an overseas vendor to come in and dismantle it. They have been paid, and that is under contract. That should be in place by the end of the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a massive undertaking. It is going to cause inconvenience to the people of Southside and the people of St. George's. But I would invite both groups to look to the future, that a lot of the challenges that we have had in delivering water consistently to all of them—and we will have the ability to expand to a wider constituency in St. George's, [which] is shortly going to be in place. This will involve the trenching of all of Southside and most of St. George's. But we are doing it in phases so that we can have everything online in St. George's by the end of this year.

This is a \$30 million project, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am so pleased that even though some of the well-known contractors have contracts for this, we deliberately designed it so that we could carry out a lot of these works concurrently. And so a lot of small contractors have been approved and awarded contracts to carry out work on this. A number of them have hired new staff in order to undertake this work. The aim here is to create jobs, as many as we can as soon as possible, as well as to improve the infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are excited about this project. We are committed to bringing it to a conclusion and as efficiently and on budget [and on] time as we can so that the people of St. George's and the people of Southside can exhale. And we see the reliable services that they require as well as employing young Bermudians in this time of economic stress.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, the Honourable Colonel Burch.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. MP Pearman.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr. Pearman, Honourable Member, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good evening.

So interesting, the Economic [Recovery] Plan for Bermuda. I do not envy the Minister of Finance, and I will say that right from the start. It is a tough job in a tough time. We are facing a triple whammy. We have the cost of living here in Bermuda, which is ex-

ceptionally high. We have had the pandemic of COVID-19, which has been exceptionally painful. And we have a general economic malaise that started some time ago and it is still with us today. I mean, it is not much better.

The resultant consequence of this triple whammy is that we are now facing considerable unemployment. We have had businesses that are shuttered, businesses that may not reopen. And we have people who are out of work and unemployed. We have gone from those who were forced to do two jobs, two-job households, to households where there are no jobs. And that is tough. And it is going to be a tough hole to get out of. And I say that in a nonpartisan way. It is for that reason that I do not envy the Minister of Finance. As I say, he has got a tough job.

I think I would start, though, picking up on something that he said in his speech earlier this afternoon when we started. And that was that he felt that Bermuda's economy never recovered from 2009. Well, to be fair, that is one view. That is one view of things, and it may not be an incorrect view. But it kind of misses the elephant in the room. And the elephant in the room is that we have never recovered from our own mistakes on the economy. It was Bermudians, not the rest of the world, who have managed to create \$3 billion in debt. So yes, there was an economic downturn in 2009. And yes, I accept it impacted Bermuda. But let us not forget the mess we have made—because it is a mess. And to the extent that we are able to clean some of it up, that is a good idea.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am surprised I am being point-of-ordered on that. I would have thought it was obvious. But go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the gentleman is saying that it is a mess. Without going into details, if you do a deep dive on what the money was spent on, the majority of money was spent on paying the workers of this Island. I do not equate that to a mess, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Well—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful for that intervention. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Member, yes. Let us take the high road.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I was. I was, and I think I had just said, as I was being interrupted, that I do not envy the Minister of Finance for the difficulty of his role.

Economic plans. I mean, obviously it is always a good idea to have a plan. If you do not have a plan, that is a pretty bad situation to be in. To have no plan at all is not a good sign. I do think, though, to be fair and slightly light-hearted about it, when you think of economic plans you think of sort of Soviet five-year plans and great, lofty ambitions that are boldly stated and rarely achieved. And that is not just the Soviets. Some of the people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the debate earlier this evening seemed to say that we should all be excited because we have a plan. Well, yes. But you are the Government. Governments are supposed to have a plan. That is your job. And Parliaments are supposed to try to improve legislation. That is our job. So, you know, great you have a plan. In fairness, you have been the Government since 2017, and I am delighted there is a plan.

The question then is, Is the plan a good plan? And the answer, *my answer* to that question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it is a bit of a mixed bag. If you look at the Economic Recovery Plan . . . and I know that some will have read it, and many will not. But if you are going to read, the important bits of the plan, the important bits are to be found at pages 19, 20 and 21 where there are seven broad themes that have been laid out. And it is those seven broad themes which are hopefully going to guide us forward to prosperity.

And let me say from the outset that some of these broad themes are matters about which I doubt anyone in Bermuda would disagree. And others I think people in Bermuda might seriously disagree. And that is what plans are about.

The number-one item, which is page 19, is economic diversification. Now, economic diversification is something that is often discussed in our politics. As long as I can remember in my political memory going back 30–40 years now, everybody was on about, *Will we have a third pillar of our economy?* Because our economy, of course, is international business and the tourism industry, now more often called hospitality. And everyone has been going on about a third pillar because diversification is generally a good idea. If you can diversify and not have all of your eggs in one basket, that is a good thing.

But economic diversification is only as good as the third leg, the third pillar or fourth pillar. So the question is not economic diversification. I think on that we can agree. It is a good idea to diversify if you can. The question is, To what are you diversifying? What is that third pillar? How much will it hold up the table? And again to be fair, some of the ideas that have been identified underneath that theme are good ideas.

I am actually not a huge personal, individual fan of casinos. But I recognise that enhancing the ca-

sino industry in Bermuda will hopefully create jobs for Bermudians. And no matter what side of the aisle you are on, we are all about that. And so that is a decent idea, and let us hope it flourishes. Let us hope it does well. Let us hope those casinos are open very soon, as the Premier promised in his speech earlier.

Some of the ideas I am less confident about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, medical tourism. It is a nice idea, and it is not necessarily a PLP or OBA or UBP or anybody's idea. It has been around for ages. But that involves doctors and nurses and costs and hospital buildings. And the question really is, like most questions, How viable is it? And can you execute it? And what does the cost/benefit analysis look like?

So turning to a couple of the other broad themes, and I am not going to cover them all, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I do not think I need to take my full allotment of time. The key financial element, that is the second of the seven (at page 19) is to try to reduce the cost of mortgages by lowering interest rates. Again, not necessarily a PLP idea, it has been around for ages. And if this Government is able to achieve it, I for one will compliment them when they do.

The third of the seven is infrastructure investment. This is a common way to try to inject money into your economy, into your community, into your workforce, get people back to jobs. Infrastructure investment is something about which I would suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you and I would agree on that. Good idea. The question then is, Is the particular investment the right idea? Because infrastructure investment costs money. So if you are going to deploy the money, is it the right idea? Does it give people the work? Is there a long-term benefit? And does it make sense?

Now, some of the suggestions I think, respectfully, do make sense. The Minister of Public Works, Colonel Burch, when he talks about the need for a water and waste treatment facility, that has long been identified as a problem in Bermuda. It is a good idea. How it is deployed is another matter, and maybe I might criticise him months to come. I am in the Opposition, after all. That is what we do sometimes. But as an idea, it is a good idea. So let us see how it is deployed; let us see how it is executed.

Again, trying to be balanced about this. But a Shoreside Facility to process fish? Hmm. I mean, who is asking for it? Who wants it? Do the fishermen want it? Has there been a cost/benefit analysis? I mean, those are legitimate questions not just for us in the Opposition to ask, but for those in the Government to ask both around the Cabinet table and the back bench. Before a lot of money is spent, will that be a frolic that really benefits no one? Maybe it will; maybe it will not. But please, those who have the ability to look into this and ask questions, please do so. I have asked mine.

The other one that is interesting, and I accept it is interesting, is vertical farming. Again, I think the idea in theory of having vertical farming in Bermuda is

an excellent idea. The question is, How much will it cost? Where is the money going to come from? How long will it take? And will it work? If it works and if it is profitable and there is investment, one can easily see why vertical farming is a benefit to a small island with little land. The question is, How much money are you spending? Because when you spend money on something like that, you are taking money from something else. There is only a finite amount of money in the world. And hopefully we will bring more to Bermuda. And on that I think we can also agree.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, turning then to expanding the resident population. We have consistently recognised the need for inward direct foreign investment. We recognise the need, that international business needs to be able to hire everybody, the best and the brightest, most of them Bermudian if they can be. That is what we want, what everybody wants. But you need to have flexibility in immigration for this Island to work. And I was slightly disappointed when one of the earlier speakers said that, you know, *We can only assist international business if it works for Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda*. To me that is not appreciating the point that international business is what is employing many of Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda. And more importantly, when the tide went out with COVID-19, what it revealed was that the people who were working from home and still being paid fully, and no one lost their jobs, were largely in that sector.

So we Bermudians, we collectively, again not being partisan here, should be thankful for the support and sacrifice that was made there because there were other countries where people were thrown to the wind, where people lost their jobs, where people were sent off the island. So I think it is fair just to recognise that international business does create jobs and it creates Bermudian jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not touch on all of them. But let me skip to the sixth of the seven points. And that is health care reform. I have spoken previously about my interests, which are declared on the parliamentary website. Notwithstanding my interests, for which I am attacked for the opinion I hold, my opinion is a true one. And it is this: Comprehensive health care reform is not a solution. It would be an unmitigated disaster. It will take this economy down when we are already sinking. We need to keep our head above water. To pivot now and completely restructure our health care system to put it in the hands of Government and government control would be the biggest mistake we could ever make.

And I very much hope there are some on the other side of the aisle who fear that, who understand it in the spirit in which it is offered and recognise that this is a time to focus on what we can actually do, not pie in the sky, grandiose ideas. That is not to say that every Bermudian does not deserve health care. Every Bermudian does deserve health care. Universal health care is a good thing and we should achieve it. But

completely rewriting the book and starting from scratch is a very, very risky venture.

Also, to a worker health care means charges, it means cost to them. And at the moment people's payslips look a little bit like Swiss cheese; out comes the payroll [tax], out comes the hole for social insurance, out comes the hole for pensions, out comes the hole now for health insurance. We have to be very careful. And that example is not just me being political, but the example is very real.

When we were here two weeks ago (and I will not reflect on a debate), there was a question posed to the Honourable Minister of Labour. And we discovered that the minimum wage proposal, the numbers . . . well, it has not yet been decided whether they are even gross or net. I find that remarkable. I really do. But leaving that to one side—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: —whether something is gross or net—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order.
Honourable Member Hayward.

POINT OF ORDER [Misleading]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It was a Wage Commission Report. I indicated that the Government had not made a decision or determination on how we are going to move forward. Let's not equate to whether or not we recognise that we are going to have a rate, whether it is gross or net. We just simply have not made a determination yet. But the Member is trying to make out like the Government does not have a clue on whether or not minimum wage is going to be before or after deductions and that is not correct.

The Deputy Speaker: All right.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you to the Minister of Labour for that intervention. I asked the Minister of Labour whether the three numbers that had been proposed by the Commission (I accept they were proposed by the Commission, not by the Minister) were gross or net. And the Minister said that had not been decided yet. I think, respectfully—respectfully to the Minister, respectfully to you Mr. Deputy Speaker—but I do suggest that to come up with numbers for a potential minimum wage without first knowing if they are going to be gross or net . . . I mean, that's fundamental, because what is a worker taking home in his or her pocket? That is the question there. What is an employer paying? It's fundamental.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, but, Honourable Member, that was a report. That was not the final decision—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Oh, I appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: —on the Minister's behalf.

Mr. Scott Pearman: But nonetheless, three numbers were put out there and it had not been decided if they were gross or net. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think it is an unfair observation for me to make. People do different things in different ways. I am not criticising the Commission; I just think it is a pretty important point that really one might have started with that building block.

Anyway, I will continue on Mr. Deputy Speaker, to another topic, another item that has been identified. And that is tax reform.

Now, there has been a fair amount of talk about tax reform, and today is a pretty topical day for tax reform discussion given decisions that are being made well beyond our shores. I will say nothing more about that, but what I would caution is that before we launch into a complex and wide-ranging discussion on the topic, perhaps we just wait and see what is going to happen globally and see what all of that looks like. I offer that as sound advice to those on both sides of the aisle, because Bermuda may not have much choice in the matter. But we shall see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, turning to another matter, and that is a digital bank. When the Opposition Leader spoke in the House earlier this evening (or maybe it was late afternoon) asked a couple of pertinent questions. He asked what will they look like, these digital banks? And he also asked, equally important in my opinion, how will they be regulated? So those are some questions.

I think we just wait and see what that looks like, see what it will mean, see whether Bermuda is out in front, whether Bermuda is in the middle of the pack. Sometimes you want to be the leader in the market, sometimes (to quote the Premier) you want to be bold. But sometimes the bold person who runs out in front finds out there is no one behind them as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, turning now to pensions. The Honourable Member for our side, MP Susan Jackson, spoke very well, if I may say so, on the subject of pensions earlier. What I think she says was . . . she made no criticism whatsoever of the decision by the Minister of Finance to take a more flexible approach to the release of pension monies. However, she very sensibly . . . and I absolutely agree with her, and I have said this in the House previously. And indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe we agreed on this point the last time you spoke on the pension debate, and it was on this: This money is rainy day money. And, yes, it's raining. But it will rain again. And if there is no more money the next time it rains, what

are we going to do about it? So, yes, I understand the need to allow for flexibility to release some pension monies, but we must be very, very careful because if you turn the hose all the way on, you might run out of water.

Turning then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I do not want it said that we do not offer solutions, we do, let me offer a few. And again, these are overarching themes much like the themes I have just discussed in the economic report. We need to focus on how to make each and every Bermudian successful. And I speak of that in the teach-a-man-to-fish school. And I mean man or woman. But teach a man to fish, rather than give him a fish. They need to be empowered to be successful and stand tall and proud on their own. And that should be the function of this Parliament on both sides of the aisle.

The best way we can try to do that, in my respectful opinion, is to focus on job creation through increased job training. That is it. I appreciate that is not cryptocurrency. I appreciate that is not FinTech. I appreciate that is not pie in the sky, blue economy, green economy, red economy, brown economy, whatever. It is just about job creation through increased job training. It is very simple, but it is what is going to work and what we should focus on.

Why do I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I say it because right now we are seeing one of the most massive changes in the way people work that we have seen in decades. If you go back 30, 40, 50, 60 years ago, people worked very much the same. Times were different, yes. The 1940s were fundamentally different from the 1980s, fundamentally different than 10 years ago. But the way people worked, maybe even the people who were working were different. Women might have been at home then. Right now she might be the sole breadwinner. That might be different. But the way people worked was often the same. You went to the office. You did a job. You went to the jobsite. You went to the construction site. That was how work was. COVID-19 has upended that. And we see a fundamental sea change in the way people work now with this idea of flexible working.

The question we need to ask, all of us on both sides of the aisle, is what does the job 10 years from now look like? What are those jobs? There is no point trying to prop up an industry or build an industry if in 10 years that industry will not exist. For example, building a big fish factory up in the east, if there are no more fish in the ocean, might not be a good idea. I say that respectfully.

But what are those jobs of the future? I mean, it is going to be tough to know because look at what the youth of today, and they are far younger than you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker (although I may be a few years younger than you), but there is artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual reality, computer games. The idea of a computer game being a job career path, and a successful one . . . and we see people who are

wanting to move to our shores to do these businesses. AI, artificial intelligence. There is an artificial intelligence company in Bermuda right now. I mean, we grabbed and held them, welcomed them with open arms, absolutely.

But back to jobs and job training, how do we figure out the jobs of tomorrow, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We figure them out through data-driven solutions. And we need to collect the data to try and get the solutions. And right now, respectfully, and it is not a criticism of the Government, we are not thinking of data-driven solutions, in my respectful opinion.

Entrepreneurs, small businesses. Bermuda has always seen a flourish in this area. But it is the path to the future because people who can work for themselves, do work for themselves. They want to work for themselves because if they can do so successfully it brings them the greatest satisfaction ever. It is far more satisfying to be a successful self-employed person, which I once was, to being an employee, which I now am. Totally different life. Everything you do, you do for you and for your wife, your husband, your family, your extended family, et cetera.

So, how do we pivot forward? We have to create confidence. And if we are going to create confidence in Bermuda as a destination that people are going to want to bring their money to and spend their money in, we have to stop the sniping. We need direct inward investing. International business is our friend. We may not always love them, but they are our friends. And we need to recognise that because right now if we had gone through COVID-19 without international business, where would we be? Ask yourself that.

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am almost finished—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I don't know how much time I have left.

The Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order. You have seven minutes left.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Oh, another one?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Christopher Famous: This gentleman keeps referring that this Government is sniping at international business. That is a total misleading of the truth. The Minister of Finance has worked in international business all of his career, and he is most connected to financial business, even more than the previous Minister of Finance. He has not been sniping at international business. Nor did the previous Minister of Finance.

Mr. Scott Pearman: All right. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just correct the intervention (I believe that was MP Famous)—

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I did not say the Government was sniping at international business. I said, firstly, that we Bermudians need to stop the sniping if we are going to succeed. I said, secondly, and quite differently, that international business is our friend, that they create jobs, and I asked the question where would we be without them, having gone through COVID-19. Those were two different comments. I think everybody else listening understood them and, MP Famous, I hope you understand them now. But there we are.

Cost benefit analysis. If we are going to go down these roads of vertical farming, of the Shoreside facility for fishing . . . and, again, they are not necessarily bad ideas. But let's make sure they are what people want, that they are going to create jobs, and the jobs of the future, and that the money that is spent on them is not just a quick job to inject cash into the economy now because we need to, but that there is a 10-year benefit, and a 15- and 20-year benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the point of order by MP Famous, I was just checking how much time I had.

The Deputy Speaker: You have five minutes, Honourable Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. I will be less than that. Thank you, very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let's turn then again to solution-driven observations. It is not very sexy. It is not shiny and bright. It is not FinTech. And, by the way, I would like to say that the Opposition was supportive of FinTech. It was not critical of FinTech. I think it raised some issues about cryptocurrency and something called Arbitrade, but that really is not FinTech.

But leaving that to one side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is a good strategy for getting our way out of this? Well, the Premier likes to say everything in the past is the past and we're the future, and we have to be bright, bold, and we have to go over here, and let's run off and find a new idea. Well, maybe. Or maybe you just try to grow what you know. Maybe you look around you and you see what is there on the ground and you ask yourself, *How do I make this better? How do I grow this? How do I create jobs in the existing sectors that are here in Bermuda now?* Right? It's the low-hanging fruit. Forgive the cliché, but that is what it is.

It is international business. It is the hospitality sector. I mean, forgive me, I bang on this often when I get on the subject, but the trust sector. We have one of the most amazing trust sectors in the whole world. Let's pay some attention to it. Let's grow it. It could

create 300, 400, 500 new Bermudian jobs in a year if we focused on it. But we have to want to focus on it. And we have to start. Before we focus on it we have to recognise that it is important to all of us. So we have to stop the sniping—not at the trust sector, MP Famous (before you interrupt).

Anyway, the point being, grow what you know. It is common sense, but it is common sense for a reason.

There is a suggestion that we on this side of the aisle are all about doom and gloom. I always find that funny when I hear it. And one of the Members earlier tonight said that we were gloomsters and doomsters. Not at all. I am one of the most optimistic people you will ever meet, and it drives people crazy because I am always thinking we can solve this, we can get it done, here's a good idea let's try it. Right? I am blindly optimistic, perhaps. But I am also realistic. So, when we say that \$3 billion in debt is a big problem, we are saying it because we mean it. We say it because we need to tackle it. And I am pleased to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Minister of Finance in that concern. It is not me being doomy and gloomy.

When the Opposition Leader asks legitimate questions, as he did today (What happens if there is another COVID-19 spike?), that is a legitimate question. It is a question that the Opposition should ask. And I am pleased that he did ask it. Indeed, I was going to ask it myself. It's a good question. What happens to this plan if we face another spike? Is it out the window? So, it was a legitimate question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the earlier speakers spoke about the charity sector. He lamented the difficulties that the charitable sector is facing. I too [spend] a little bit of time in the charitable sector. It is not my main job, but from time to time I try to assist with a particular charity and I can share his view. Charities are in trouble. I note what is going on in the papers this week about the unions. I note the to-ing and fro-ing that is going back and forth. And if position or ground needs to be given perhaps we redirect money to the charities that went to the unions in the last Bill that came before this House. That is my two cents, take it or leave it.

Anyway, back to the plan.

Before the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the wording of the motion was changed. It was changed from "take note" of the PLP economic plan to "support" the economic plan. I am not quite sure why. That seemed like a little bit of political gamesmanship to change the wording. But, having had the wording changed on me, let me try and deal with it.

I support Bermuda first and foremost. Island above party. Island above politics. I even support this PLP Government in their efforts to support Bermuda when I believe this Government is getting things right. I commended the Minister of Transport recently with the homeporting—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Pearman, your time is up.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'm up?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Let me say that I hope I may one day be able to support this plan if it works.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister Dickinson.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am here.

Before I give some closing remarks, I just want it to be abundantly clear, because there has been a whole lot of talk about international business [IB] and how prominently it has been mentioned in my prior remarks or in the plan. Let me say this: I delivered my third budget in February. And in my budgets there has been a consistent theme about doing what we do right, continuing that work, and trying to grow the things that we are successful at. We have been extraordinarily successful and extraordinarily fortunate, especially over the course of the last year, in dealing with this pandemic and the overwhelming support that we have received from the international business sector. I believe I have said on a number of occasions, but for the fact that there was resilience in the IB sector, I cannot imagine what state our economy would be in.

One thing that Members may not know, because I do not talk about it much, is that I speak with CEOs of domestic and international businesses every single week. I started doing that about a year ago because I was in Europe on an engagement trip once, and I realised that I did a lot of European engagement and there was a strategy around it and there did not seem to be an identical strategy for engagement domestically. I talk with the alphabet soup all the time, ABIR, ABIC, BILTIR, trust industry accountants, CI-MA, investment managers. But there is significant value to sometimes engaging in direct one-on-one conversations with stakeholders. And I have been doing that with my team for the better part of the last year for a number of reasons.

First is to let them know that the Government cares and appreciates their contributions to our economy. Second is to find out if there are things that we can be doing in support of initiatives that they may have going on in furtherance of the growth of their businesses. Third are there any things that we are not doing right that they would like to advise us of, because, funny enough, when people are in groups they are less willing to say what they really think some-

times than when they are in a one-on-one conversation. Fourth, to check to see how their interactions with the BMA are going, because the BMA is a critical part to the success of our international business sector and their desire to want to be in Bermuda.

These calls have been going on for a long while, and will continue to go on. We also check in to see how their employees are doing, how they are navigating COVID-19. So, the notion that we are not in any way thinking about international business because I have not featured it more prominently in my remarks could not be further from the truth. We understand what got us through the pandemic, at least from the economic side. And we guard this business judiciously.

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

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, plans are just that. They are plans. And the plan documents, if they are done properly, should be living documents. They are documents that reflect the thinking at a particular point in time. And as a live document it is open to being changed as you learn more, know more, take on some experiences and you adapt. I can tell you, a year ago (that would be last June), there was not a murmur of a concept of climate risk finance.

During the work of the Economic Advisory Committee, towards the end, the concept of climate risk finance came up. It was an opportunity for us to leverage our international business sector and the investor interest in Bermuda. We turned on a dime. And I pledged my support to the team leading this effort to be wherever they want me to be whenever they want me to be there to talk to investors with the aim of encouraging more people to invest more money into Bermuda to create more jobs. I have also pledged similarly to the asset management group, that I have a passport and I will travel.

The trust industry, which I know fairly well because for a while I chaired Butterfield's trust companies, and served as a resource on some of the more complicated situations, if they want me to be more supportive and require my presence in their marketing efforts, all they have to do is ask.

We are, contrary to what people may think, a pro-business Government. But we also have a very strong sense of doing very good from a social perspective. And I think that represents an ideal combination because for all of the good that we want to do socially, if our economy is not thriving and throwing off tax receipts the revenue for the Government, then it does not work. So, the relationship has to be symbiotic.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go into all the detail refuting points that were mentioned this evening because I think my colleagues have done a very good job of highlighting the important things that this plan encompasses and the work that we want to do going

forward. So, what I would like to do is thank my colleagues for their work and the work that the Government has done over the course of the last year, in particular, during the pandemic, and for their work on the plan to successfully move Bermuda beyond the pandemic.

What has been presented today is a comprehensive and considered plan to facilitate the necessary growth and development to positively and proactively shape and shore up Bermuda's future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again express my sincere appreciation to all key stakeholders who provided guidance and assistance in the development of the Economic Recovery Plan, and those who were instrumental in the strategies to support our people and the businesses in critical phases of the pandemic. We must also recognise the remarkable work done by the team in the Ministry of Finance, and persons within the public service who have provided input, and members of the EAC [Economic Advisory Committee], our industry partners, the BMA [Bermuda Monetary Authority], BDA [Bermuda Development Agency], BTA [Bermuda Tourism Authority], the Financial Policy Council, the Fiscal Responsibility Panel, members of the BermudaFirst Group, and most importantly, the people of Bermuda.

Our special thanks also go out to our frontline workers who have been key in our fight against this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that change is coming, and this next period of Bermuda's history will usher in a new era of equality and inclusiveness. This Government is committed to continuing to demonstrate strong and decisive leadership as we navigate our way to a recovery. It is necessary to focus on the guidelines and initiatives laid out in the ERP blueprint as well as the important work done in other key areas. We will take the action necessary to work with the people of Bermuda to build a better and stronger Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

³**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for sitting in. Thank you, Minister, for bringing that matter to a close.

Members, that brings us to the end of the Orders of the Day. Being that both of those matters were motions, there are no third readings this evening.

With that said, I call on the Deputy Premier to move the [adjournment] for us.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the deliberations of the House for two weeks from today, which I believe will be . . . I cannot

³ [Question put on Motion](#) as amended on page 1574

recall the date, but I do believe that is the appropriate date. It will be two weeks from this Friday.

The Speaker: Yes, two Friday's from today, correct.

Thank you, Deputy Premier.
Does any Member wish to speak to that?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will not be long.

The Speaker: MP Famous, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I won't even need 10.

The Speaker: All right. I will hold you to that.

COVID-19— SAFELY REOPENING THE ECONOMY BY FOLLOWING THE RULES

Mr. Christopher Famous: My video may kick out, but I am going to say something.

Mr. Speaker, today is a very proud day for my father's side of the family. Today the granddaughter of my Aunt, Dame Lois Browne-Evans, the first female Leader of the Opposition in the Commonwealth, was called to the Bar of Bermuda, Ariana Caines.

She is not only the granddaughter of this side of the family, but also of the Caines side as well. It is a proud day for everyone who is from St. George's. I hope she follows her grandmother's legacy one day and gets involved in politics.

Mr. Speaker, I am actually off the Island right now because I had a family member pass away this week. But I just want to say that I have been out in America and I have watched the people of America. And what I have seen gives me reassurance in human nature. Back in Bermuda the environment has become somewhat toxic with persons having their views and their attitudes and their accusations against this Government, that we are dictators, that we are forcing people to do things against their will and so on and so forth.

Two nights ago I had dinner with the Representative of the BVI in Washington, DC. We were discussing different things about the overseas territories, the colonies. And one of them was the pertinent issue of safely reopening our economies, and the accusations that governments are getting in terms of trying to do this.

A few weeks ago the president of the United States asked that the CDC announce that people do not have to wear masks if they are vaccinated. A lot of people were upset in some ways, or frightened, because they were thinking that everyone will stop wearing masks now. What I have seen out here is that

people are still wearing their masks. You never know who is vaccinated or who is not. But everybody are still wearing their mask. You go inside stores, and they have signs up "Masks are mandatory." You go in restaurants, "Masks are mandatory." The point I am getting at is that the people, the workers in America, realise that in order to get back to work they have to do it safely, without infringing on people's rights, but safety is first and foremost.

New York, as you know last year this time, was the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak in America. There were thousands of deaths every week. So these people realise what it is when people break the rules and what the results are. Thousands die and hundreds of thousands are unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, in the Cayman Islands, the place that so many people like to praise . . . earlier today we heard some people praising the Cayman Islands. The Government is considering making vaccines mandatory for guest workers.

In Antigua the Government is offering incentives for people to get vaccinated. In the BVI there are a number of businesses that are telling their employees that they need to get vaccinated. What am I saying this for? Yes, people are upset. But last year this time when there was no work and thousands were unemployed, tens of thousands were unemployed, who was happy? This year our countries are opening back up.

This year we have a ship in Hamilton. That same ship will be in Dockyard. That same ship will be in St. George's, or Murray's Anchorage. The fact of the matter is that these things are only happening because the Government put things in place to safely reopen the economy.

I listened to a lot of people throw a lot of darts at the leadership of this country, false accusations left, right and centre. But some of these same people throwing darts are collecting money every month, every week, whilst not working. Some of these same people are now back to work, taxi drivers are back to work because tourists are coming in. This all did not just fall from the sky as MP Weeks likes to say. This happened because there were calculated strategies put in place.

Am I saying that everybody needs to get vaccinated? No, I am not saying that, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is that this Government . . . we just spent the last six hours talking about an economic recovery plan. All of that is null and void if we have another outbreak. I will not say all of it, that's an exaggeration. Much of that will be null and void if we have another massive outbreak.

This weekend there is going to be a change in our phases. So I am asking the people of Bermuda to follow the regulations. We cannot afford another outbreak. We cannot afford for our people to be out of work for another year. We have Delta Airlines now telling their new employees that they have to be vac-

cinated in order to work. We are not at that point in this country. Turks and Caicos are telling their guest workers if they want to work in their country they have to be vaccinated. We are not at that point in this country. Our numbers of those immunised are rising. And the number of those getting sick is going down. So that is proof positive of the efficacy of vaccines.

So I say to those who are making false accusations against this country and against this Government that it is not working. Look around you. Stop being myopic; look at what is going on in countries the same size as ours. Look at what is going on in America. The rules are the rules, Mr. Speaker. The rules are there for a reason. We didn't just make up rules just to say that we are in charge.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close here and say this: Dame Lois Browne-Evans, if she were leader of this party right now, would have to make the same decisions that the Honourable David Burt is making, because she would want her people to survive. And she would want her people to thrive.

On that note, again I congratulate cousin Ariana. I want to also wish my father a happy 85th birthday, and my Aunt Effie who is the grandmother of Minister Jason Hayward, an 89th birthday, and condolences to the Daniels family of Devonshire.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Famous.
Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will not use the full 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker, I am trying to keep it a short night tonight.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. Good evening to the listening public and to my fellow colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, sadly, this week Bermuda lost its fifth road traffic victim of the year. And while it is always a tragedy to lose a person of any age, it hits different when it is one of our youth. So, my condolences and my heart go out to the family and friends of the young lady.

Mr. Speaker, many times over the past three years in my role as chairman of the Road Safety Council, I have made statements and speeches call-

ing for change in our driving behaviour to make our roads safer. Prior to my becoming chairman, our roads were at a level of a national crisis. We were losing an average of 12 persons per year to traffic collisions. At that time, in 2018, the then Minister of National Security commissioned the Road Safety Council to come up with a road safety plan to help address this epidemic.

Mr. Speaker, I can say here today that the implementation of the Road Safety Plan, in conjunction with roadside sobriety checkpoints under my tenure, has made a difference in changing the driving culture on our roads. Our past driving culture was one of acceptance of driving under the influence—go out for drinks, drink as much as you want, and then get into the vehicle and drive home. This was a risk that many thought was worth taking, risking their life and the lives of other road users.

Statistics prove that most impaired driver incidences happen within a mile of a person's home. And we see this first-hand in Bermuda. The closer [an impaired driver] got to home, the more relaxed a driver under the influence got, which under those circumstances put them at a higher risk of an incident.

Much effort was put into the roadside sobriety checkpoints by the BPS, the Bermuda Police Service. And I want to thank them for those efforts. Many times the BPS was on the receiving end of negative comments and I want to commend them for the job they did with that initiative. As a result of that initiative, we saw a reduction in impaired driving and the resulting collisions.

With the constant messaging and promotion of not driving while intoxicated, the public has listened and bought into changing their behaviours. The Council has encouraged multiple options to getting home if one goes out to drink. The principle is, if you plan to go out, plan how to get home safely. Options include hiring a taxi or minibus, having a designated driver, or have a friend or relative come and pick you up. There are even businesses that have extended into industry. Hitch and HomeSafe are some examples. So there is no reason for a person to choose to drive while under the influence of alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, choice and decision-making skills are key while driving. Each time a driver or rider starts a vehicle they have a choice to follow the rules of the road and put into practice good driving behaviours. Being a responsible driver and holding yourself accountable for your actions while driving are major steps towards making our roads safe. Choose to drive at the correct speed, choose to give your full attention to your driving, choose to follow at the correct following distance, choose to use your indicators correctly, choose not to drive and speed recklessly. These are some decisions that we as drivers and road users can make to help make our roads safer. Not only motorists, but also pedestrians must play their part to make our roads safer.

While we encourage persons to get out and walk, run and cycle on our roads, they must understand that they share the roads with vehicles. Walkers and runners should always face the traffic while they are on the road and remember to wear bright and reflective clothing while out at dusk, at dawn or at times of low visibility. Cyclers must always ride single file unless otherwise instructed. Pedal and electrically assisted cyclists must wear a helmet when they are riding on our public roads.

Mr. Speaker, my comments tonight are a personal appeal to motorists to adhere to the rules of the roads and follow them. It is personal for me because I have known too many people lost on our roads, and each life lost is one life too many. Someone's father, brother, son; mother, sister, daughter, each life touches someone and no one wants to get that call to say that they have lost a loved one.

Again, I reiterate my call to the motoring public: Slow down, drive with care and caution, and do not drink and drive.

Switching gears, Mr. Speaker, earlier today we had debates on the Bermuda Plan 2018 and the Economic Recovery Plan. And while I will not get into those debates, both had references to transport and travel in and around Bermuda. I will refer, however, to the Transport Green Paper 2019. This was a very comprehensive and detailed report, some 191 pages.

The report spoke to, among many things, 1) public servers and commercial vehicles; 2) active transport; 3) electric and hybrid technology; 4) road traffic. I applaud the Minister of Transport for commissioning this report and acting on the objectives of this report.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said today about climate change and global warming, and one might ask how that relates to transport. Each person on this earth leaves a carbon footprint. In Bermuda we may not have much industrial pollution that affects climate change, but we have many vehicles that emit carbon into the air. Government, as we have heard from the Minister of Transport, will soon be adding electric buses to its fleet of vehicles. This is a major step forward in addressing and reducing our carbon footprint in Bermuda. Public buses are some of the largest vehicles and emitters of carbon on our roads. And by phasing in electric buses as we will be over the next few years, this will help to reverse our carbon footprint. Reversing our carbon footprint will help make us and our environment healthier and better.

As I say that, Mr. Speaker, it amazes me how much our bodies and the environment are connected. The carbon that we as humans emit as CO₂ is then consumed by plants, trees and vegetables. They, in return, emit oxygen which is what we, as humans, rely on. And then the cycle continues. So, not only should we have electric vehicles, [we also need] buildings that are eco-friendly using solar power and other green technology while we also must protect our envi-

ronment and green spaces. With as much as was said earlier today regarding the economic plan, we must also have safe, clean and healthy emission-reduced roads for potential investors into our future to travel on.

We must continue to offer beautiful beaches, world renowned golf courses, historic forts and many acres of national parks for visitors to see. But if we do not provide safer roads for them to get there, then all of that is for nothing.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I support this Government and their efforts to develop and lay out a plan for Bermuda's way forward. And as we enter into the weekend, and into wider aspects into the summer months, I want to remind the motoring public to be safe and make smart driving choices. We will see an extension of the curfew from 10:00 pm to 12:00 am on Sunday. And while there is this relaxing of the curfew, we must not relax in our driving. So please give yourself enough time to get home without having to speed to beat the curfew. It is too dangerous and not worth the risk.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments for tonight. Again to the listening public, be safe. And, Mr. Speaker, you were not in the Chair earlier this morning, so again, I do just want to wish you a happy birthday coming up this weekend. I will not say what, but happy sixty-something birthday. Enjoy your night, Mr. Speaker, and all the rest of my colleagues. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to add—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that the gentleman from St. George's?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I will start off by wishing you a happy birthday.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Your son gave one of the digits away, and there are only nine others left.

The Speaker: I am still behind you, sir. How's that?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I think you might have caught me up on this one!

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: If I am ahead, I just hope I can stay ahead, that's all.

The Speaker: All right.

MURDERS IN BERMUDA, A NATIONAL EPIDEMIC

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, that note is the vein on which I come forward tonight.

You and I, Mr. Speaker, go back to school days. We go back to Dalton E. Tucker, the greatest of all, with Elsie Bascome.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: When I speak of Dalton Tucker, respectfully, and Elsie Bascome, it evokes in me the most serious respect that I would have for anyone that would ever have walked God's earth. And I say God's earth because those ladies, and those who worked with them, groomed us in an exceptional way. And, Mr. Speaker, you and I have lived, not quite three score and ten, but we are chipping away at the left. Mr. Speaker, we have lived long enough to have children of our own. And, Mr. Speaker, we have lived long enough to make a contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I spent a Saturday afternoon with a good friend of mine who shared with me his recent tragedy. When he was sharing the story of the death of his son, Jordan Outerbridge, with me, the pain of which my brother, Lincoln Outerbridge, felt and shared with me was like none other. I could have been other places on that Saturday (it was two Saturday's ago tomorrow), I choose to be with my good friend.

And when he told me that his son, Jordan, had been shot eight times and murdered, how horrific that was, and how he left a wife and two children, one very young, Mr. Speaker . . . when he told me that story, I could not help but feel sorrow. And when my brother told me who all his family was, I did not realise that I knew a great deal of his family. But, Mr. Speaker, the most tragic thing about what my brother had shared with me was that what he was sharing something that is fresh, something that happened within the last two months, something that, had it been some 25 years ago, we would have still been talking about the murder of Jordan Outerbridge.

My colleague, the Minister of National Security, shared with me just how many families are confronted with this since the escalation. And I know my colleague, the former Minister of National Security, understands it extremely well also, as do all of those who work in this space. But I cannot help but feel for those parents who now see in a country where we are becoming anaesthetized (if that is the right way to put it) to something that is extremely tragic.

And with murders become all too commonplace, and with us not talking about it and helping to understand it, we may even be giving licence to those whose moral compass has slipped so far that they feel that there is nothing wrong with their way of justice. And I am here to say that there is something wrong with it, and I am concerned about it, and I do feel for my brother. I promised him that I would speak to this, that I would raise this issue, not that he is not appreciative of those who are working, but he wanted folks to know that his son was a good person who fell victim to gun violence in this country.

He shared with me the aspirations and dreams that he held for his offspring, and how through this COVID-19 period Jordan's mom, who I also know (but did not know at the time) could not even come here to grieve. Imagine, Mr. Speaker. Imagine all of the circumstances of people who are impacted by COVID-19 and we are finding so many things to tear each other apart about. But this is worth our delving into. This is worth our spending some time on. This is worth our grappling, this is worth our getting to the bottom of more so, Mr. Speaker, because this speaks to the very essence of what this small Island is becoming, in a land of only 60,000.

This is with no disrespect to anyone working in this space. I am carrying the message of a grieving father, a grieving mother, and grieving parents out there and family members who are feeling very much lonely because the society in this country is becoming anaesthetized to the most heinous of acts that are articulated in the teachings that you and I, Mr. Speaker, were brought up on. And my appeal tonight is that the time that we do spend, and the good time that we did spend today, I commend the Finance Minister and the teams that have been working. I am very proud of the speeches that were given.

The only sad thing is that the young man in his first year as a parliamentarian would choose to wear that red and blue. But I understand it, but cousin Jache, you did another great presentation. But you had to go and wear that red and blue today. But I understand why. I understand way better than most.

The Speaker: Mr. Swan, you mention that we go back to earlier school days. I think in those earlier school days you wore a lot of red and blue, if I remember correctly.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. But on the road to Damascus I ended up in St. George's. And like Saul, I changed my name to Paul of St. George's, Mr. Speaker. And I am asking us. And I am asking us to journey on that road to Damascus tonight, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the circumstances that Brother Lincoln finds himself in. And not only him, the other parents out there who do not have closure in their lives. These things are first in any mother's or father's

mind and heart of someone who has been snatched away.

And, yes, Honourable Member Lister spoke about the young lady that was snatched away so tragically this weekend. It pains me for that family. But these calculated murders in our midst of 60,000 on 22 square miles are of epidemic proportions for Bermuda. And I speak tonight from the platform given to me by Elsie Bascome and Dolly Tucker from Glebe School. This is the problem that we must delve deeper and deeper into. And I am not saying that we are not delving deeper into it, but we need to dig far deeper, because it is a problem that is far more serious than any debts or problems that we are addressing that came into being because of a global recession brought upon by decisions made in boardrooms by business people who made decisions that were not in the best interests.

And then we have been dealing with a pandemic that has gripped our country. And we are navigating through that. But these murders done by people who grew up in households like yours and mine, Mr. Speaker . . . or maybe not so much. But we have got to get to the bottom of this and dig as deeply as we possibly can. I consider it, and I know you and others do, a national emergency, Mr. Speaker.

My brother got my attention that day and, like I said, Mr. Speaker, to think that Jordan Outerbridge only died less than two months ago, murdered, shot eight times, and yet there are those who do not even know about Jordan Outerbridge. But I am here, Mr. Speaker, to raise the level of consciousness about the Jordan Outerbridges out there in this world and the families, like Brother Lincoln Outerbridge, who are out there grieving, Mr. Speaker, looking for closure.

Men make laws. And we try to make good laws. It was put to me, *Hey Swanie, you know, slavery was lawful*. So, not all the laws are right. But I want to talk about God's Law and that we need to address the fact that in this small little Island the level of murders that we have had in the last two decades are of epidemic proportion and it is a national emergency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

No other Member? Thank you.

MOTION

BERMUDA'S ECONOMIC PLAN, SUMMARY REPORT

[Question put on motion as amended]

The Speaker: Before we close, there's a little bit of housekeeping.

Minister of Finance, when we closed your motion just now we should have clarified that the motion as it had been amended asked for the approval of the House, and that the House supports that motion.

I just need to clarify that the House is in agreement and supports the motion as it was amended. I am putting that now just to ensure that Members understand what the amendment requested.

Are there any objections to the support of the Bermuda's Economic [Recovery] Plan Summary Report?

[No audible reply]

The Speaker: There are none.

So we will take it that the motion is [approved], [there is] support, and the [Bermuda's] Economic [Recovery] Plan [Summary Report] is approved.

[Motion carried: The House supports Bermuda's Economic Plan, Summary Report.]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

The Speaker: With that said, I am going to close the House. But before I close the House, MP Famous, you made reference to . . . I was out of the Chair this morning during Congratulatory and Obituary Speeches, but I would just like to be associated with the condolences to the Daniels family on the passing of Mrs. Louise Daniels, the wife of Mr. Kenneth "Sundown" Daniels, mother to Rhonda, Roxann and Kyle. I have known the Daniels family all my life.

You mentioned that my birthday is this weekend. Well, Rhonda and I have birthdays a day apart, and we have gathered for birthdays since our childhood. So I would just like express my condolences to her and to her family, and let her know that they are in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: With that, the House stands adjourned until two weeks from today at 10:00 am. Thank you, Members. Have a good weekend.

[At 10:31 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 18 June 2021.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING****18 JUNE 2021****10:00 AM***Sitting Number 20 of the 2020/2021 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
Ms. Beale, will you lead us in prayer?
We see you, but we do not hear you, Ms. Beale.

The Assistant Clerk: Do you hear me now? Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: A little louder.

The Assistant Clerk: Can you hear me now?

The Speaker: Yes. You are a little faint, but go ahead.

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.
Thank you, Deputy, for your assistance there.
Members, we are now in session for today's sitting.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES*[Minutes of 4 June 2021]*

The Speaker: Members, the confirmation of Minutes for the 4th of June has been circulated. Are there any amendments required? No amendments. The Minutes are confirmed as printed.

*[Minutes of 4 June 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING****APOLOGIES**

The Speaker: I have two matters that I would like to acknowledge today. MP Dunkley and MP Swan have both indicated that they will be absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: This morning we have three papers. The first is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, would you like to present your paper?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to everyone. Good morning to the listening public.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT
FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020****REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF BERMUDA
ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR
APRIL 1, 2017 TO MARCH 31, 2018**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Registry General Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 December 2020 and the Regulatory Authority of Bermuda Annual Report for the fiscal year April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.
The next Paper and Communication this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour.
Minister Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**TRADE UNION AND LABOUR RELATIONS
(TRANSITIONAL) REGULATIONS 2021**

Hon. Jason Hayward: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable

House of Assembly the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Transitional) Regulations 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is the completion of Papers and Communications. We now move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have six Statements this morning. The first Statement this morning is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

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

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker, again.

The Speaker: Good morning. Go right ahead.

REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, today I laid for information the [Annual Report of the Registry General](#) for the year ended the 31st of December 2020. The Registrar General recognises the essential role that vital statistical information plays in planning for the provision of services in areas such as tourism, health, education and housing, to name a few, and has performed his duties to a high standard in the recording, collating and presenting of the data to be included in the annual report.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 19 of the Registration (Births and Deaths) Act 1949, the Registrar General shall, within 90 days after the expiration of each calendar year, compile for publication in such form and manner as the Minister may approve a summary of the births and deaths which occurred during the year, together with a general report on the increase or decrease of the population of Bermuda. The Registrar is required also under section 35 of the Marriage Act 1944 to publish a summary of marriages conducted each year.

In preparation for the annual report, Mr. Speaker, the Registrar has relied on information received from the Records Office of the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital relating to births; from the local funeral directors and medical practitioners in relation to deaths; and from local marriage officers and Masters of Bermuda registered ships in relation to local and maritime marriages, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, the report, which deals primarily with the vital statistics pertaining to the Island's residential population, indicates that there has been a slight increase for the first time in four years in the number of births. In 2020 there were 540 births, an increase of 15 (or 2.9 per cent) over the 525 births recorded in 2019. Also, the live birth rate of the population has increased by 0.3 [point per thousand], from 8.2 in 2019 to 8.5 in 2020. There was one baby born at the residence of the parents for the year ending 2020. This represents a decrease in the number of babies born at home in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the distribution of live births by nationality, based on information provided by the parents at the time of registration of their children's birth, for 2020 reflects that 80 per cent, or 432 of the total live births have at least one Bermudian parent. In 2020, of all births, 108 (or 20 per cent) have parents who are both non-Bermudian.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are advised that in 2020 a total of 566 deaths were recorded among residents. A death rate of 8.9 per thousand of the population for 2020 reflects an increase of 31 (or 5.8 per cent) from 535 recorded in 2019. The report also indicates that there were six deaths in respect of non-resident persons. Also, there were [no] stillbirths recorded for the 2019 period.

Mr. Speaker, there was a decrease of 26 in the estimated resident population at the end of 2020, at 63,880 as opposed to the 63,906 in resident population estimated in 2019. At the end of 2020 there were 2,492 more females than males in the population figures. However, Mr. Speaker, from the report given, and statistics recorded in 2016 and statistics provided for 2020, it would appear that there has been a significant drop in the population from statistics recorded prior to the year 2016. However, the population estimates were re-based in 2016 after the 2016 Population and Housing Census. The re-base of the data is the reason why the population estimates are lower from 2016 forward.

Mr. Speaker, for the year ending the 31st of December 2020, there were 248 marriages performed in Bermuda, a 138 (or 35.8 per cent) decrease from the 386 marriages recorded in 2019. During 2020, marriages between parties who were both non-residents accounted for 48 (or 19.4 per cent) of the total of 248. This figure breaks the trend set over the past five years where marriages between non-residents exceeded the number of marriages between residents and marriages between resident and non-resident parties. The decrease was due to the COVID-19 pandemic where the Island had been on lockdown for a period and international travel activity had slowed down globally. The report also shows that there were 172 marriages between parties who were both residents and 28 marriages between a resident and a non-resident.

Mr. Speaker, of the total 248 marriages recorded in 2020, ten were same-sex marriages which represents an increase of six (or 150 per cent) from the total of [four] same-sex marriages in 2019. Nine of the same-sex marriages were performed by the Registry General Office as civil ceremonies, and the remaining same-sex marriage was a religious ceremony conducted by a local marriage officer at an outside venue. During 2020, same-sex marriages between parties who were both residents accounted for three (or 30 per cent) of the total of [ten] marriages. The report also shows that same-sex marriages between non-residents accounted for six (or 60 per cent), and one (or 10 per cent) accounted for the number of same-sex marriages between a resident and a non-resident.

Mr. Speaker, 70 marriages were performed on board 28 Bermuda registered ships in 2019. This total represents a decrease of 372 (or 84.2 per cent) from the 2019 total of 442. Of the 70 maritime marriages, none were same-sex marriage ceremonies. The decrease was due to the COVID-19 pandemic that brought the cruise line industry to a halt in March of 2020.

There were no maritime marriages registered between April and December of 2020. The cumulative number of marriages (local and maritime) processed through the Registry General for the year ended the 31st of December 2020 was 318, as compared with 828 for the year ending 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the Domestic Partnership Act 2018 allowed for the formalisation of unions between parties. In 2020 there were eight domestic partnership unions recorded for that period. Five of the domestic partnership ceremonies were performed at the Registry General Office, and the remaining three were performed at an alternative, approved location as allowed for under the Domestic Partnership Act 2018.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the annual report seeks to provide an illustrative statistical digest of vital events such as live births, deaths, stillbirths, marriages, domestic partnerships, adoptions and re-registration of births for the year ended December 31, 2020. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister Burch.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

UPDATE ON WANTLEY

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide an [update on the property, Wantley](#), located at

20 Princess Street in the City of Hamilton. The property was purchased by the Bermuda Housing Corporation in March 2008 with a view to developing the site. In the intervening years funding was curtailed and the building was shuttered and boarded up. Mr. Speaker, members of the public will be aware that the property has been dormant for many years with little interest in utilising it. Over the ensuing years vagrants began to take over the property for illicit use, resulting in further damage and fires regularly erupting inside the building. Despite the Bermuda Housing Corporation frequently boarding up all of the entryways to prevent illegal access and use of the building, the problem persisted.

Mr. Speaker, we have had three approaches over the years, nothing from 2008 to 2016—when the Bermuda National Trust who wanted it donated to them but expressed that it probably made more financial sense to demolish and rebuild; a private citizen in 2020 expressed interest for a business hub; and in early 2020 the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation was working to repurpose the building and make it into their headquarters. However, following the most recent fire in December 2020, a structural appraisal was carried out. This report recommended a complete overhaul of the building, including installing new plumbing and electrical, structural repairs, costly restoration work, and finishes to the interior and exterior of the building. The estimated cost to bring the building up to code was \$1.2 to \$1.3 million. The report further stated that it would be more cost-effective to demolish the structure and rebuild than carry out these costly renovations.

Mr. Speaker, while the building's history was very much considered, in light of this information and the fact that the property was a health and safety issue for area residents and the adjacent Diabetes Association building, the Bermuda Housing Corporation took the tough decision to demolish the structure. Following confirmation that the building was not listed as a Historic Building, an application for a demolition permit was made in April 2021 and approved in May. Surprisingly, at no stage during the planning application process of advertising for objections did anyone comment—most notably during the two-week period when the application was advertised. With a demolition permit in hand, the Bermuda Housing Corporation tendered the demolition work, which began earlier last week.

Mr. Speaker, recently, however, following the chorus of objections, the Department of Planning contacted the Bermuda Housing Corporation to inform that, albeit the building is not listed, its location is in a Historic Protection Area and therefore requires planning permission to demolish. Since the stop-work has been issued, work has ceased temporarily. As it stands now, the Bermuda Housing Corporation have resubmitted a planning application to seek approval to demolish the building under the Historic Protection

Area protocols to the Department of Planning for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we note the new interest in saving the building following a lengthy period of silence in relation to the future of Wantley. We also note that none of the entities have any funding to support a renovation. Regrettably, as is the case with many old and vacant buildings, the cost of renovation is such that one could never get a return on their investment. Additionally, in our view it makes no economic sense to simply renovate a building that sits on a quarter of the property when planning for better use of the site makes more sense. Whatever is finally built at this site will recognise the historical nature of Wantley.

Mr. Speaker, I visited the site this week, and in speaking with the contractor (who has been retained to continue clearing out the building and removing overgrown foliage), he noted that more than 20 truckloads of debris had been removed thus far from inside the house. The contractor has been requested to salvage as much of the crown moulding and other items of historical value for safekeeping. He noted that some of the vagrants are still returning for shelter each night, especially since the building is now wide open. The state of the building is such that the estimate for repairs, as is the case with any renovation, is likely to be higher than the current estimate.

Mr. Speaker, it really is impractical for those who have a keen interest in retaining historical buildings to watch them deteriorate to a beyond-salvage state, and then raise objections to their demolition and simply expect the Government to fund their rehabilitation. The current economic climate does not allow for the funding of such projects when there are a multitude of critical initiatives that go unfunded year after year. While we recognise that this is an extremely sensitive subject, in this economic climate it cannot be considered and we shall pursue the planning process to achieve its demolition and thus remove the danger that the building provides to those who illegally enter the site. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour.

Minister Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The President: Yes, Minister.

PHASE 2 TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Hon. Jason Hayward: I rise today to provide you with an update on the education, training and employment programmes executed during Phase 1 of the Workforce Development Department's Re-employment Strategy. Additionally, I will elaborate on [Phase 2 initiatives](#) aimed at preparing Bermudians to take ad-

vantage of job opportunities and connecting them with jobs that arise. As part of the Government's mandate, the Ministry of Labour introduced a National Re-employment Strategy to provide training, career development and employment opportunities to better position unemployed Bermudians in their transition back into the workforce as we move beyond the pandemic. I am pleased to report that the Department of Workforce Development has continued to provide training opportunities for unemployed Bermudians through a phased approach.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly grateful to all of the public and private sector stakeholders who have partnered with the Ministry in the development and execution of the numerous programmes and initiatives that have benefitted many unemployed Bermudians. I will now highlight a few of the achievements and employment opportunities realised as a result of these initiatives offered in Phase 1 of the Re-employment Strategy to date:

- Thirteen new training, career development and employment programmes have been successfully delivered.
- Over 650 persons participated in the various face to face, on the job and/or online virtual learning, webinars, internships, apprenticeships and trainee programmes.
- Approximately 70 individuals have received part-time or full-time employment as a direct result of the training initiatives.
- Since November 2020, the number of unemployed Bermudians who have received employment opportunities through the Workforce Development Department's Bermuda Job Board referral process is 388.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that the Department of Workforce Development is not a recruitment agency. The department's principal responsibility is to provide persons with the training, development and support needed to ensure readiness should job opportunities arise.

In a joint initiative with the Department of Financial Assistance, the Department of Workforce Development has completed Personal Employment Plans for a pilot of 20 financial assistance clients. Employment Plans include Work Readiness, Financial Literacy and Computer Literacy training, along with individual career coaching and support. The department aims to achieve work readiness credentials for all able-bodied clients on financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the public that the Department of Workforce Development has now entered the second phase of the Re-employment Strategy. Phase 2 of the strategy will build upon the progress made to train and employ Bermudians in Phase 1. Phase 2 initiatives will focus on training, re-skilling, up-scaling and utilising the transferable skills of unemployed Bermudians. This strategy is to assist unemployed Bermudians to become better equipped

and positioned to take advantage of opportunities that exist in specific closed and restricted job categories in the job market. Phase 2 will focus heavily on industry-driven initiatives that better connect training with employment opportunities for unemployed Bermudians in high-demand occupations. To this end, the following initiatives are currently in place:

(1) Economic Stimulus Programme Jobs Initiative.

- Nine companies have expressed interest in employing Bermudians as apprentices and trainees, as well as experienced tradespersons;
- The department has begun to reach out to the companies to determine what skill sets are required to make the appropriate pairing from the department's client unemployment database;
- The department aims to provide 20 job opportunities to employ Bermudians from their client base;
- To date, four Bermudians have been placed in employment, with another 16 going through the assessment stage for this new joint partnership with the Department of Works & Engineering;

(2) Industry-Driven Network Partnerships. The department plans to continue forging additional partnerships with industry professionals and HR professional training providers to broaden the range of on-the-job training, internships, virtual learning webinars and online career development and training programmes;

(3) Training and Development Programmes. The department plans to expand its current vocational and technical programme to include new short- and long-term certificate programmes to increase employment opportunities that include on-the-job internships and experience for unskilled and semi-skilled Bermudians. New certificate programmes will include, but are not limited to the following:

- IT Certifications
- Coding
- Radiology
- Elevator Mechanic
- Solar Technicians
- Masonry
- Automotive Electric Car Technicians;

(4) Employer and Industry Engagement. The department will continue to collaborate and consult with key industry stakeholders and partners to discuss their specific employment needs and requirements for small, medium- and large-sized businesses. As recently as this week, the Chamber of Commerce has agreed to form a subcommittee to work directly with the Ministry towards synergy of strategies to re-employ Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, I can report that through the public appeal to unemployed Bermudians, over 270

candidates have registered on the Bermuda Job Board. The department will follow a three-step process in this regard: (1) assess all candidates; (2) refer suitable candidates to employers for potential employment opportunities; and (3) provide the support needed to assist candidates in achieving their employment goals, including résumé development, interview skills and coaching in other areas.

Mr. Speaker, despite Bermuda's workforce continuing to contract, [thus] creating increased levels of unemployment for Bermudians, the Government remains committed to ensuring that we do all that we can to prepare Bermudians for job opportunities that exist and to connect them with these jobs where possible. As Minister, I will ensure the cross-ministry work of the [Ministry] of Labour remains focused and intentional in its multi-pronged approach to facilitating training and employment opportunities in the implementation of Phase 2 of the National Re-employment Strategic Plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister of Education, would you like to present your Statement now?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, and good morning, colleagues.

The Speaker: Good morning.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I would like to update my honourable colleagues about yet another exciting educational opportunity for the people of Bermuda. Today I am pleased to announce another initiative to promote the relationship between the Bermuda Government and the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, by way of some background, the [University of the West Indies \[UWI\]](#) was founded in 1948 and is the largest and longest-standing higher education provider in the English-speaking Caribbean. Currently, UWI is ranked in the top 4 per cent of universities in the world.

Mr. Speaker Bermuda and the University of West Indies have developed a long-standing relationship, as we have benefited from being an Associate Country member of UWI since 2010. As an Associate Country member Bermudian students can enjoy and greatly benefit from the preferred tuition pricing that this relationship offers. Currently in the works is an MOU and articulation agreement between the Bermuda College and the University of West Indies—an agreement that will allow credits earned at Bermuda

College to be transferred directly towards a degree programme in the UWI Open Campus.

Mr. Speaker we understand that going to university can be a large financial commitment. However, the Bermuda Government is dedicated to fostering opportunities that allow our students to pursue their educational goals. Our commitment to providing opportunities to all [Bermudian] students has been very consistent and clear. This Government has always tried to reduce the financial hurdles preventing anyone from pursuing their educational dreams. With that in mind, we strongly encourage more Bermudians to take advantage of the preferred tuition pricing available through our relationship with the UWI so that they can follow their dreams and positively contribute to our Island home.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to grow, foster and renew the existing relationship between Bermuda and the University of West Indies, we are excited to offer Bermudians the opportunity to learn more about UWI through a Live and Interactive Virtual Open House on June 24 from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm. We welcome high school graduates and their parents, college graduates, as well as mature students who are looking to continue their studies or change careers, to attend this virtual open house. This virtual open house will give prospective students an opportunity to learn mostly about the Open Campus, which covers the distance learning programmes of the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, the session will feature information on (1) the UWI's 800-plus certificate, diploma, undergraduate and post graduate degree options; (2) on-campus and online learning facilities; (3) the application process; and (4) student support services. There will also be a portion of the evening dedicated to answering participants' questions.

Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to share that those who register in advance and attend the virtual open house will be entered into a [drawing] to receive one of four one-time Tuition Awards valued at \$2,500 each when they enrol in UWI's Open Campus, which facilitates online learning. To register, please send an email to askus@gov.bm for more information.

Mr. Speaker, the open house will be live streamed via Zoom and will be simulcast on CITV, the Bermuda Government's Facebook page and YouTube. Bermuda, we strongly encourage you to attend this open house to learn more about UWI.

Mr. Speaker, as previously mentioned, the University of West Indies is currently ranked in the top 4 per cent of universities in the world. We are encouraging Bermudians looking to pursue further education to consider UWI as a viable option. There are many opportunities available to Bermudians seeking higher education, and UWI is one of them. We assure you that the Ministry of Education remains dedicated to creating new opportunities for our students to pursue their educational goals. This means thinking outside

the box and revisiting pre-existing relationships to make them more applicable to our needs today.

Mr. Speaker, so to those who are about to graduate from high school, those who have graduated from high school and seek higher education, those who have their undergraduate certification but want to pursue their graduate certification, and those who are considering changing careers, please take advantage of the amazing opportunities offered through our partnership with the University of West Indies. Tune in next week Thursday to learn more about the University and the 800-plus online offerings the university has to offer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Minister, the next Statement is yours as well. Would you like to present that now?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise before you and my honourable colleagues to share about the summer programmes that the [Department of Education](#) will be putting in place for our students to help make up for the lost number of school days that have been experienced in the past school year.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, with one of the major impacts being the loss of learning time. Although we could not make up days lost during this school year, students will be given opportunities to engage in online learning programmes and activities, and in some cases in-person summer programmes ranging from the preschool to the senior school level.

Mr. Speaker, let me first share about these opportunities for our students, starting with the preschool I-PLAY Summer Boost programme. I am pleased that the Reading Clinic has partnered with the Department of Education to extend learning into the summer for preschoolers who are transitioning into primary school. Seven of our public preschools signed up to work with the Reading Clinic to have I-PLAY this year. I-PLAY refers to Interactive Phonological Literacy Activities for Youngsters.

Normally, the I-PLAY tutors would come into the preschool and screen all of the preschoolers on pre-literacy skills, especially in the area of phonological processing. Phonological processing skills are those that are all about listening and sounds. Can children hear the difference in sounds in words and sentences? Can they hear the separate words in sentences? Are they able to notice rhyming words or words that begin with the same sounds? Phonological

processing skills are a strong predictor of later reading success, and it is more important for children to first be able to hear sounds than to identify letters.

Mr. Speaker, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the I-PLAY tutors had limited access into these seven preschools. As a result, the programme was delayed. The Reading Clinic was only able to screen our preschoolers during the latter half of the school year, leaving no time for tutoring these children identified as needing help with gaining valuable pre-reading skills prior to entering primary school. Because of the Reading Clinic's commitment to helping our preschoolers to have the best start to primary school and learning to read, they have joined with the Department of Education in providing an in-person I-PLAY Summer Boost for our preschoolers. The I-PLAY Summer Boost is offered to parents of those preschoolers who could benefit from a boost in literacy and extra support in phonological processing.

The Summer Boost programme will be offered in four locations: Port Royal Primary, St. Paul's Preschool, Lyceum Preschool and St. George's Preschool, from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm during the month of July. The programme is literacy-rich and play-based. All learning activities are centred around studying insects while being engaged in large group and small intensive tutoring groups to teach pre-literacy skills including those that target listening. The programme mirrors a typical preschool day. We thank Government Estates and Workforce Development for joining the Department of Education to provide this Summer Boost through the Reading Clinic to our preschoolers.

Mr. Speaker, our students at the primary and middle [school] levels will have access to online reading and math programmes throughout the summer. Many schools already have subscriptions to online reading programmes for their students—programmes such as Literacy Footprints and Raz-Kids. Students who attend primary and middle schools in the western zone of the Island have access to the Achieve3000 reading programme. These online reading programmes are available 24/7 and can be accessed using most devices. These programmes will enable students to continue to read e-books and take quizzes. This is the same as they would normally do when in school. Students' work, their efforts and progress will be automatically recorded as they engage in these reading programmes, and their teachers will be able to access their results at the end of the summer.

Mr. Speaker, for those students who do not have access to Literacy Footprints, Raz-Kids, Achieve3000 and other online reading programmes offered by their schools, the department is encouraging parents to subscribe to the Epic online reading programme, a free online reading programme that will give students access to hundreds of e-books and opportunities to take quizzes after they have finished reading the books. Parents can also share their children's results with their school.

Mr. Speaker, we want all of our students to spend time reading during the summer and to engage with these online reading programmes. The department wants children to read every day. The minimum expectation is for all students to read e-books for at least 30 minutes twice per week; once they finish their e-book, to take the quiz, taking time to think about the questions carefully; and to give careful answers with the aim of scoring a 4 out of 5 on the quiz. We also encourage our students to take advantage of books offered at our local libraries.

Mr. Speaker, let me focus on mathematics. The public school system is working to improve students' math knowledge and skills. I am pleased to report that we will offer an eight-week online math tutoring programme during July and August for all primary and middle school students. The programme will run every Tuesday and Thursday from July 6 to August 24 with specific times allocated for school year level groupings of students. Mr. Speaker, this online programme is being developed and personalised for our primary and middle school students based on the end-of-year math assessment results which have been analysed to determine gaps in learning. Additionally, each teacher in the system will receive a gap analysis report for their class, and every parent will also be provided with a report that indicates what their child has mastered, partially mastered or not mastered.

Parents will receive a schedule of when tutoring will be provided for specific topics. Students may sign on for all tutoring sessions. However, we especially want parents to ensure that their children sign on for tutoring sessions that may match their learning gaps. After each session students will be shown how to use their Methodmaths account to practice the skills that have been demonstrated. They will receive instant feedback as they progress, and all lessons will be recorded and shared on the Ministry's website so that students can revisit them as part of any later revision.

Mr. Speaker, the tutoring sessions will focus on deeper conceptual understanding as well as procedural modelling, and international expert math teachers will deliver these sessions. The engagement of math experts is possible because of the department's partnership with the UK-based organisation, Primal Academic Innovations [Limited]. Students will also have access to DreamBox during July and August.

Mr. Speaker, the question is always asked, *What about students who do not have access to the Internet?* The department has planned for that. Students who cannot access online reading and math tutoring programmes will be provided with subject-specific learning packets for core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. Schools will be asked to identify students who do not have online access. The parents of these students can contact the Department of Education and collect from the offices learning

packets for children from P1 to M1 that they can complete during each week of the summer break. The packets that will be provided to students will have answer keys, and this will enable students and parents to get immediate feedback on student progress with the learning activities they have completed.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with tradition, the Department of Education will offer its annual Summer School Programme at Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy [DAME] during the month of July. This programme, which runs from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, is for students who attend DAME. There is also an after-school programme which runs from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm. While the programme is very much fun-based, the programme's primary goal is for students to continue to work on their current Individualised Education Plan (or IEP) and goals, and reinforce the skills they have mastered during the school year. Students will participate in activities such as WindReach, and they will continue to receive art and music therapy.

Mr. Speaker, the summer programme at DAME is delivered by the staff at DAME and other carefully selected applicants. The team for summer school also includes the school's nurse and social worker. All staff who work at the summer programme must participate in a mandatory two-day orientation, and planning and preparation session. This year staff orientation will be on July 1 and 2, as students are scheduled to commence on July 5.

Mr. Speaker, the overarching outcomes for the summer programme at DAME are (1) 100 per cent of students pursue a minimum of two IEP goals with one objective per goal; (2) 100 per cent of students participate in small groups or individual adaptive PE sessions; (3) 100 per cent of students participate in community-based activities at least once a week; and (4) 100 per cent of students receive a data-based progress report at the end of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, STEAM Academy is offered every summer. Students from Primary 4 to M3 have an opportunity to register for the Education Department's virtual STEAM Academy this summer, with the theme *Pandemic Vibes—Making the Shift*. This year's STEAM Academy will provide an amazing outlet for our students who have been extremely resilient during this COVID-19 experience. The annual programme, operated by the Gifted and Talented Education programme (better known as GATE), will be delivered remotely from July 5 to 28 at the cost of \$65 per week. Using online tools, students will engage in remote learning classes from 10:00 am until 2:15 pm. With a focus on project-based learning, students will create a collaborative motion picture from script to screen reflecting their COVID-19 experience. They will be writing scripts, composing music, creating visual animations in 2D and 3D, and ultimately producing a collaborative motion picture.

Mr. Speaker, students at the STEAM Academy will once again have the opportunity to participate in activities offered by AH! TEMPO and Digibotics to provide a comprehensive array of opportunities for students interested in STEAM. Mr. Speaker, AH! TEMPO, under the directorship of local Music Director, Mrs. Malinda Jennings, and a team of local experts in the visual and performing arts will immerse P4 to M3 students in the multi-facets of dramatic and vocal performance, and musical composition. Hosted by Mr. Neville Zuill and his team, Digibotics will immerse P5 to M3 students in 21st century learning experiences that develop digital content creation skills. The team will work with students as they create 2D and 3D masterpieces while exploring the world of stop-motion animation and digital effects. Student applications will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Interested parents can register their children by completing the online registration form found at the following link: <http://www.steamacademybermuda.com>. Parents are encouraged to register their children quickly, as this is a great opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills and their talent, and be creative while increasing their knowledge and learning to work together as a team.

Mr. Speaker, the department will also be providing summer school for students in the primary and middle school functional skills classes and for students in functional academics classes at the middle school level. The programme will run from July 5 to 28, with a daily schedule from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. The morning classes will focus on academics connected to students' IEP goals and objectives, and curriculum content in math, English and science for the functional academic students. The afternoon classes will focus on life skills, physical, social and health sessions. An adaptive PE teacher will also work with the students on their IEP goals. Students will participate in field trips to WindReach, Tulo Valley Plant Nursery and Kaleidoscope Arts Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, at the senior school level the two senior schools will provide a summer school programme for credit recovery and skills improvement. Students enrolled in the programmes will include those who have previously taken a course and failed or those who have passed the course but want to improve their grade. The schools will deliver the programmes for English, mathematics, social studies, science and foreign languages using a remote learning platform. There will be opportunities for selected students to attend in-person classes. The summer programme will run from July 5 until July 27 with morning and afternoon sessions held from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm and 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm, respectively.

The programme will also afford students an opportunity for independent practice daily, and teachers will be available to provide students with additional support as necessary. Both schools will facilitate their respective summer school programmes independent-

ly; however, teachers will collaborate through common planning to ensure equitable delivery and common assessments. Mr. Speaker, there will be in-person accommodations for students without devices and for learning support students.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we will be using some of our [newly] donated Chromebooks during the summer months. I am pleased to report that we have teachers from five primary schools and one middle school piloting the use of Chromebooks with approximately 200 students, as follows:

- two classes at Francis Patton Primary School;
- two classes at Harrington Sound Primary School;
- two classes at Heron Bay Primary;
- three classes at Purvis Primary;
- two classes at St. George's Preparatory; and
- all M1 students at Whitney Institute Middle School.

An orientation meeting has already been held with the teachers taking part in the programme to provide the following:

- pilot programme overview;
- goals for the pilot;
- pilot expectations (minimum lessons and surveys);
- communication protocol within the group;
- the overview of Chromebooks; and
- support channels that will be available.

The piloting of the Chromebooks is well underway at these respective schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Minister, just a comment: If you intend to speak later in the day, you may want to adjust your system. You kept fading out, particularly near the end of your Statement. Your audio was dying out back and forth.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next Statement, which is the last Statement this morning, is in the name of the Minister of National Security.

Minister Ming, would you like to present your Statement?

GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM UPDATE

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker and listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide this Honourable House with an update on the important work of the National Security Ministry's [Gang Violence Reduction Team](#) [GVRT]. The last quarter saw the Gang Violence Reduction Team diligently at work in the com-

munity with a proactive approach that has proven to be quite effective in both the neighbourhoods and schools. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the Gang Violence Reduction Team has been charged with the strategic development of prevention and intervention programmes that target our at-risk population.

Mr. Speaker, over the past four months the Gang Violence Reduction Team have noticed a spike in attempted home invasions and robberies allegedly from known gang members and affiliates. With that being said, the Gang Violence Reduction Team continues to actively use and implement their multi-pronged approach in the affected communities. In order to lower community tensions, the Gang Violence Reduction Team further increased its focus on Street Level Outreach throughout the shelter in place, curfew and other emergency measures. The Gang Violence Reduction Team continued to visit targeted neighbourhoods and build connections and relationships with at-risk young people and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the team continues to show a visual presence throughout the Island as they visit the various homes and neighbourhoods, especially those that are impacted by antisocial behaviours. The Gang Violence Reduction Team provides intervention through the formation of trust-based relationships that serve to de-escalate and mediate tensions when necessary. Mediation of the tensions and conflicts has been direct and inclusive of individuals from all areas. The outreach work of the Gang Violence Reduction Team has connected many at-risk individuals to various resources and long-term solutions that provide case management services. The goal is to steer these young people towards a proactive quotient and pro-social activities that provide a range of opportunities for change.

This has not been without its challenges. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, on April 6, 2021, Bermuda experienced its first fatal shooting. Again, I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Jordan Outerbridge. Another Bermudian family is now in mourning because of senseless violence. We also have our hearts and prayers to the latest victim as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team's Coordinated Crisis Response Unit (commonly known as CCR) has been steady at work. Since the beginning of the year, the team have been deployed six times to support the community through emotional hardship and serious incidents. The CCR Unit have reported to the hospital several times and made several home visits to affected families, along with targeted community assessments after each incident. The CCR Unit have trained staff in place to provide immediate emotional support to the affected families and areas. They also provide immediate triage in order to mitigate the effects through general support, counselling services and aftercare.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce to this Honourable House that the Redemption Programme has been operational for the past 20 weeks. The 13 trainees have not only expressed their desire for a better life, but they are applying the skills they have learned towards a pro-social and productive path that can be seen within the programme. The trainees have been placed in various local businesses around the Island to complete 30-week work placements with the Gang Violence Reduction Team's Business Partners. Each trainee has participated in weekly job coaching sessions, weekly case management sessions, life skills sessions, job readiness workshops and career exposure sessions. On a case-by-case basis the team has provided crisis support and educational support as needed.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team has delivered 95 individual case management/job coaching sessions with Redemption Programme trainees. Additionally, the team has supported trainees through 15 crisis situations. Since the programme was launched 20 weeks ago, the team have delivered 25 sessions covering key areas which include job readiness skills, life skills, career exposure, goal setting and general personal development. The Gang Violence Reduction Team is now working with each trainee to secure each of them a full-time employment opportunity and/or a full-time education opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce the following:

- Three trainees were offered a full-time job during their training placement and have recently transitioned into their new role.
- Five of our current Business Partners have plans to transition their current Redemption Programme trainees to part-time or full-time employment.
- Four of our current trainees are actively seeking full-time employment and/or part-time employment. The Gang Violence Reduction Team are supporting these trainees to prepare résumés and apply to various businesses for jobs.
- One trainee has enrolled at the Bermuda College for the fall 2021 semester.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team has also remained in touch with many targeted schools, although many formal programmes were temporarily suspended during the past year due to COVID-19 regulations in our schools. The team has continued to work with the school administration and student services teams at targeted primary schools, CedarBridge Academy, Berkeley Institute and Success Academy to provide support services for at-risk students. The team visits the schools on a daily basis to provide incident management support, mediation services, individual student support sessions, restorative sessions and small group sessions. Through these ongoing interactions, the Gang Violence Reduc-

tion Team, along with other service providers, are able to help students realise their self-worth and see the many opportunities of self-improvement available to them.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team is preparing for summer programmes and targeted prevention outreach initiatives. They have worked closely with targeted student service teams to identify at-risk students who will need extra support and connection as the summer break begins. The Gang Violence Reduction Team plans to connect younger students to camps and with local charity scholarships if needed, and will check in and provide small group sessions to engage older students who have been identified.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the summer break the Gang Violence Reduction Team selected a new cohort of students for the Summer Work Placement & Mentoring Programme. The summer work placements are structured to equip the students with the skill sets for future employment. The programme is due to commence on July 5, 2021, and will employ 16 targeted young people with an eight-week paid [work] experience at local companies. The young people have been chosen from the Gang Violence Reduction Team's high school intervention programmes, case management services and Success Academy students.

Mr. Speaker, the programme provides the 16 young people mentoring support to ensure their success in the workplace. The programme was created to address the void in professional development opportunities for young people who have participated [in] or can be prone to antisocial behaviour and have subsequently been labelled as "troubled teens." This programme provides on-the-job work experience along with mentorship and coaching. It is intended to offer a satisfying and meaningful work experience whilst building the skills and knowledge needed to transition to sustainable long-term employment. I would like to wish the 16 students all the best as they take on this challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Gang Violence Reduction Team for their work and add that they cannot do this [work] on their own. I encourage all of us who love this community to roll up our sleeves to assist with stamping out the gang culture from our Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

That is the close of the Statements for this morning.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: This morning we have two sets of written questions. The first are being deferred until our next sitting. Those are the questions to Minister Wilson from MP Dunkley.

QUESTION: COVID-19 VACCINE STATISTICS

[Deferred]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: 1. Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the total number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered weekly since the commencement in January through to the week ending June 12, 2021?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the weekly number of COVID-19 vaccines discarded for any reason from the commencement of vaccinations to the week ending June 12, 2021?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with a breakdown, from commencement up until June 12, 2021, detailing the percentage of male and female, the percentage of each age group recorded as well as the racial breakdown of those administered?

The Speaker: So, we will move on to the second set of questions. The second set of questions is from MP Richardson to Minister Hayward. There are three questions, and [for] each one [MP Richardson] has indicated that he would like an oral response.

As I set the clock for our 60 minutes, MP Richardson, would you like to put your first question?

QUESTION 1: UNEMPLOYED BERMUDIANS/ INTEREST IN CLOSED JOB CATEGORIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how many unemployed Bermudians with interest in closed job categories were identified before closing those categories?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable House is aware, the unparalleled level of unemployment that Bermuda has experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has translated into Bermuda's worst job crisis in recent history. As employment levels declined, this Government did not hesitate to immediately pivot to ensure that policies were put in place to protect jobs for Bermudians and to prevent further contractions of our Bermudian workforce.

Although the Government does not have a means to directly identify the number of Bermudians who have an interest in working in the said closed categories, the Government is aware that there are large numbers of Bermudians who are seeking employment opportunities. The Government used the following methodology to identify additional categories of closed and restricted work permits: Data were collected from the Department of Statistics that identified the number of positions in proposed closed and restricted categories traditionally held by Bermudians. The number of positions identified was compared to the number of work permit holders in those categories.

Based upon reports from the Department of Immigration, the Ministry cross-referenced these data and analysed them to identify areas of capacity and demand.

Additionally, at that time data from the Department of Financial Assistance [DFA] suggested that there were over 1,390 individuals displaced from the workforce; and out of those, 396 were in the hospitality industry. The details reported to DFA included the previous place of employment for the 1,390 applicants received, which assisted in the identification of job categories to close. Consequently, this Government stands by its position of taking strong measures to protect Bermudians in the workforce, which includes the moratorium on issuing new work permits, closed categories, to ensure that every Bermudian who wants to work has a greater opportunity to be hired.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Supplementary, MP?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The Honourable Minister said the unemployment has risen. What is the current unemployment rate, and how many people are unemployed?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The most recent labour force report has not been released to the public. And I believe that once that is released to the public, the public will be well aware of what is the current unemployment rate. But based off of data that I have received within the Ministry, I am clear that the unemployment rate has close to doubled.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary, go ahead.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: What is *doubled*? From what?

Hon. Jason Hayward: The previous rate, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister indicated that the statistics were derived from the Department of Statistics, Financial Assistance and from his department. Can he give us the date of those statistics? Were they 2021? Were they 2020? Can he give us the date of the statistics used and drawn from the Statistics Department, Financial Assistance and Immigration?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, all data would have been retrieved in the year 2020, prior to making the announcement to close job categories. The data would have been derived at the time when the policy analysts within the Ministry of Labour would have reviewed the data to make its deliberation for closed categories.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Richardson, you used your two supplementaries. Would you like to put your second question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have a supplementary for that first question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

You said that the unemployment has doubled from the previous statistics. Roughly, what were the previous statistics, numerically? Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I believe that is public information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Is the Honourable Minister able to inform the Honourable House roughly what that number was, and what the number is now that it has doubled?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, again that is public information. That has already been released to the public.

The Speaker: Meaning it is in the public domain so the Member can find it in the public domain, MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member have a supplementary for that question?

None.

MP Richardson, would you like to go to your second question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: UNEMPLOYED BERMUDIANS/ HIRED CATEGORIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how many unemployed Bermudians have been hired and in which categories, since those categories have been closed?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, first, I would be remiss if I did not remind the House that the Department of Workforce Development [DWD] is not a recruitment agency, meaning it does not place Bermudians directly into jobs. Therefore, the Government only has data on the Workforce Development Department's direct clients. For clarity, the Department of Workforce Development rose to provide funding for scholarships, apprenticeships and internships and providing training and career counselling so that its clients are better positioned to find jobs.

That being said, the number of unemployed Bermudians who have received employment opportunities through the referral process at DWD to various

sector businesses and various employers is 388 between November 2020 and Thursday, June 17, 2021. High-demand areas of employment in the restricted and closed job categories include residential cleaning technicians, waiters/servers, general bartenders, administrative assistants, general handymen, general labourers, landscape gardeners (entry level), and electricians.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
MP, do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I do not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does anyone else have a supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: None. MP, you can put your third question.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I think MP Jackson had a supplemental.

The Speaker: Oh. I missed that. MP Jackson.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. I am just curious what performance measures do you have then if you are not aware of the number of people who then become employed after going through the Workforce Development training programmes?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member is a bit confused. In my Ministerial Statement, I highlighted the outcomes of the Phase 1 strategy, which included direct employment programmes, plus the direct referral from DWD which afforded persons opportunities to gain employment in Bermuda. And so we are tracking and monitoring the employment statistics that come through the Department of Workforce Development.

The question that the Shadow Minister asked pertained to the industrywide statistics throughout the entire economy. And that is data that we currently do not track.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP Richardson, would like to put your third question now?

QUESTION 3: POLICY IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With so many businesses impacted by COVID-19 and its ongoing impact, will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the data that have been collected and what impact this policy has had on local businesses so far?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the impact we have seen on businesses affected by COVID-19 has been mixed. It is the experience of the Ministry that closing categories of work permits has impacted businesses in terms of hiring. This is what the Ministry would expect, as the policy has forced employers to fully consider Bermudian applicants, which is the desired outcome of the policy. Some businesses have appealed to the Ministry to reapply for work permits, suggesting that Bermudians are not suitably qualified. However, with the Bermudian workforce continuing to contract, creating high levels of unemployment for Bermudians, I stand committed to ensuring that the Government is doing all that it can to prepare and equip Bermudians for job opportunities so that they can be suitably qualified to meet the business demands, specifically in restricted and closed job categories.

The Chamber of Commerce, in consultation with the Bermuda Hotel Association and the Bermuda Employers Council, wrote to the Ministry indicating that they wish for 9 of the 53 closed job categories to be excluded. They are limited to (1) kitchen porters; (2) reporters and journalists, (3) seasonal work permits; (4) waiters/servers; (5) electricians; (6) plumbers; (7) carpenters; (8) handymen; and (9) pot-washers. The Ministry will do a full assessment with all of the data available to determine which job categories remain closed after July 31, 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Cannonier, put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Minister, if you could, based on the impact, which industries have been positively affected by COVID-19, per se, in that they have seen an uptick in business and employment?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I do not have data on which businesses have been positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I do not think . . . I do not have that information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And I would not know how to obtain that information either.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Or [know how to] even measure the positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I am sorry. Did he say that he would not know how to collect?

An Hon. Member: Yes, he did.

The Speaker: I think basically what he was saying is it is not the type of information that they have been tracking, so he cannot provide the information for you.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay. Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I would endeavour to believe that the whole purpose of serving and the like by the Ministry would be to delve directly into what is going on through COVID-19, and exclusive of COVID-19 to really understand where the opportunities lie. And so with my previous question, I was just simply attempting to find out whether or not they saw any opportunities. Obviously then, they have not seen any opportunities. Then should we not look at trying to gather this kind of information to help people find employment?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, as stated in my Statement this morning and the answer to the Parliamentary Questions provided, I stated that we were able to directly link 70 individuals with jobs. And I spoke to some of the job categories that individuals were able to find employment in, especially as it pertains to the 388 persons who have found employment through the referral system within the Department of Workforce Development. And so I have already indicated the high-demand areas of employment, and restricted and closed job categories include residential cleaning technicians, waiters/servers, general bar-

tenders, administrative assistants, general handymen, general labourers, landscape gardeners (entry level), and electricians.

The Speaker: Okay.

Does anyone else have a supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have a supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would like for the Minister to clarify, yes.

Would the Minister please clarify? In his earlier answer to Question 3, he said something about Bermudian applications not being fully considered. What did he mean by Bermudian applications are not being fully considered?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I do not believe I used those terms. But what I will do is clarify. It is the experience of the Ministry that closing categories of work permits has impacted businesses in terms of hiring. This is what the Ministry would expect as the policy has forced employers to fully consider Bermudian applicants, which is the desired outcome of the policies. Some businesses have appealed to the Minister to apply for work permits, suggesting that Bermudians are not suitably qualified.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, my first supplementary.

The Honourable Minister just said it again, “fully consider,” in his response. And that is what I was asking for clarification about. What does he mean by that it is not being *fully considered*, that other applications are not being fully considered? Is there some evidence that people are favouring non-Bermudians? What did that mean?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: This is what the Ministry would expect as the policy has forced employers to fully consider Bermudian applicants. Which means that if there is the availability of foreign labour . . . yes, some employers do prefer foreign labour over employing Bermudians. And so if you remove the ability for those

employers to hire foreign workers in those occupational categories, it forces employers to fully consider the Bermudian applicants.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Does anyone else have a supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I was just trying to get clarification on my first one.

The Speaker: I let it slip through, but . . . Go ahead. Because you basically asked to restate your first question.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. That is all, Mr. Speaker. I was not speaking another one.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: This is my last supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. It is your second one, your last one.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Given that there is some evidence that businesses were favouring non-Bermudians, does this result in any kind of investigation or enforcement action? Is this conduct permissible?

Hon. Jason Hayward: I do not think favouring non-Bermudians is an infringement on immigration law. I believe that if they are discriminating against Bermudians and it has been demonstrated that there is a level of discrimination, that does lead to enforcement. And where those [situations] have been investigated, we do proceed with enforcement from an immigration standpoint.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, MP Pearman.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, the question originally posed was about the data that your Ministry is gathering. And you were asked a question by MP Cannonier as a supplementary about finding out what businesses may have benefited from COVID-19, if any. You said

you did not know how to gather those data. What data is the Ministry gathering?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, as an answer to my first question, which specifically talked about the data that we utilise to form the basis of our decision to close categories, I clearly explained and highlighted what data we used. We used data from the Department of Statistics; we used data from the Department of Financial Assistance; and we used work permit data from the Department of Information. And so a combination of those data allowed us to make an informed decision as to which categories we should move into the closed category area.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplementary, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

You have identified three categories of data that you gather, which were being gathered before COVID-19. Were there any specific lines of inquiry of data-gathering as a result of COVID-19?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, these data were gathered after the COVID-19 pandemic had started. And so we collected the data before we initiated the strategy in November 2020. And so this would have been data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and not prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member have a supplementary?

No further supplementaries. That brings us to a close of the written question period this morning. We will now move on to the questions from Statements given this morning. And it appears every Statement has questions this morning.

The first. Deputy Premier, you have a question this morning from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question now?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

QUESTION 1: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister spoke of maritime marriages, and he provided the accompanying statistics on maritime marriages on Bermuda-registered ships. Conversely, can the Minister provide details on procedures for maritime deaths on Bermuda-registered ships? What procedures are followed?

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: My report is about a report of the number of deaths, the actual Registry Report. The procedure is a totally different type of matter, and I did not refer to procedures in my Statement.

Bearing that in mind, I am happy to get advice from the Registrar General and pass on information and undertake to the Opposition Leader, if he can advise on the procedures related to maritime deaths.

As the Member would note, due to the closing down of the shipping industry, cruise ship industry, there was very little activity related to ships. But I will check to see if there is any information on the procedures of how maritime deaths are handled. Because I did not refer to maritime deaths in my Statement, specifically.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I understand, and I accept the Minister's undertaking. But we have Bermuda-registered ships which are not cruise ships—cargo ships and other bulk carriers, et cetera—that are registered in Bermuda. And so there may be deaths on those vessels in international waters. And as those ships are registered in Bermuda, I would have thought that the maritime deaths would have been recorded. So, my follow-up question is, Does the Minister have any details on the number of deaths on Bermuda[-registered] ships, whether they are cruise ships or otherwise?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: As I answered . . . I mean, I think part of my same answer is [applicable] to this in that there was no reference to maritime deaths in my report.

But I think the Honourable Member would know, Mr. Speaker, that the Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority handle the other classes of ships and details around what happens on ships that are registered in Bermuda. So perhaps the Minister of Transport can get that information from the Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority. But I will undertake to see if the Registrar General has information on those matters. But okay, Bermuda-registered ships and the details around most of those ships and what happens is something that the Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority would actually have available. But I will get clarification.

And I have been advised by the Registrar General that that is correct, that the information that Honourable Member is asking about will be with the Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority. But I will endeavour to see what I can extract for the benefit of the Honourable Member.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

If the information is with the Bermuda Shipping & Maritime Authority (I accept that), then should not there be an obligation for them to register information with the Registrar General?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am sorry. Can the Honourable Member repeat the question? There was a lot of reverberation in the background and I could not hear it very clearly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Basically, he was saying that if the information is gathered by the other department, is it a requirement for that department to register with the Registrar General?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is correct.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by the Registrar it is our department. There were no deaths at all within the period that I am reporting on on Bermuda-registered ships.

But what I will do, because the Honourable Member did ask another question, is to get information from the Registrar on the process around deaths on the Bermuda[-registered] ships. I will do that. But there were no deaths on any Bermudian ships. In fact, it is a rarity to have deaths on Bermuda-registered ships.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. I have no further questions.

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

The Opposition Leader is the only Member who had questions for you, Deputy.

The next Statement this morning by Minister Burch, and, Minister Burch, you have a question from MP Richardson.

MP Richardson, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON WANTLEY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Honourable Minister's Statement he said that the Wantley property was purchased by the Bermuda Housing Corporation in March of 2008 with

a view to developing the site. Would the Honourable Minister know how much was spent to acquire that property in 2008?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I saw the figure, but I do not recall what it is. I can find out before we are finished [with] this morning's Question Period.

The Speaker: MP, the Minister said he does not have the number readily available; he will endeavour to get it before this session today on questions is even finished.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I thank you, Mr. Speaker and the Honourable Minister. I would also have two follow-up supplementary questions to that which may be with the information the Minister has. So if I could put those two, and then if he can apply that as well.

The Speaker: Okay. Without your knowing the answer, do you have supplementaries?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Well, because it is . . . okay, yes. Yes, it is multi-layered, to be fair, Mr. Speaker. But we can move on because I do have a second question on this Statement.

The Speaker: Okay. Do your second question then.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister said that—

The Speaker: Just note that your camera is not on. We need to have your camera on.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Oh. It seems to be on. I apologise. Is that working any better?

The Speaker: In fact, you may have a problem because we have got a yellow triangle coming up. So I do not know what that means. But continue talking, [and just get it resolved].

QUESTION 2: UPDATE ON WANTLEY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Bermuda National Trust wanted the building donated to them. Given that the value of the building to the community is now evident, will the Bermuda Housing Corporation undertake any actions on a going-forward basis to prevent the loss of these kinds of buildings, these kinds of community-prized buildings currently in its care?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The funding for housing in this country for the last decade, so the entire time the OBA was in power, has been restricted. I personally think, and as a Minister I think that it is unreasonable for all of the people who are in favour of saving historical buildings to expect that the government or the taxpayers are going to come up with the funding for it. I think that we also have a policy where we will look at balancing this between the funding that we have and the number of buildings that we have. And clearly, the number of buildings outweighs the funding that we have. And I think it is quite unreasonable for any entity, quite frankly, to expect that buildings should be retained and restored at the taxpayers' expense. I think that is quite unreasonable.

I would think that the people who are interested in maintaining these buildings do not just come with a suggestion that they be retained, but make some effort to provide some funding so that they can carry on and do that. We will look and continue to look at the buildings that are in our remit, not just within the Housing Corporation, but within the Ministry proper, and make decisions based on the funding that is available. I think colleagues will recall that in this year's budget we had zero funding for maintaining residential units in the country to provide housing for people who are here today. We are still working through that exercise, and I hope to shortly announce some effort where we have been successful in securing funding to be able to work on providing housing for Bermudians.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Would the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how interested parties who do want to save buildings that are currently in the care of either the government or the Bermuda Housing Corporation . . . who do they approach? Is there a way that they are supposed to do that? I am just mindful that someone did apparently approach the Government; the Bermuda National Trust approached the Government to take care of the building. And that did not work out. So how can that work out in the future?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The Bermuda National Trust I believe has a policy of asking for properties for free. That is not realistic or reasonable.

But what we have experienced is people writing to the Ministry when they see a vacant and derelict property (not necessarily historic, but the same rules apply) indicating a proposal to renovate it and to have some consideration from the Government to allow for a rent-free period so that they can get back their investment. That is a far more practical approach. And the Government will be very receptive to those types of approaches that are improving an asset that the Government has without our having to come up with the funds.

There are a number of those that are currently in place, Teucer House on Cedar Avenue being one where a proposal and a lease has been signed on that. And there will shortly be a public announcement by the proprietors of that. And there are a number of residential units that are vacant and derelict that we have been approaching and had it flowing the other way from various contractors who have staff and resources, and they will work. But they have the funding, and so we have been working with them to bring them back online. That is a benefit and a multiple layer of funds—one, the Government gets an asset that is now no longer deteriorating, but also generating some revenue and in many instances providing housing for folks. So, it is helping us greatly as a Government in a time when there are limited funds to maintain or provide for new housing.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP, you have a second supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No supplementary, no new question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, there were no other Members who indicated that they had questions for you on this.

We will move on to the next Statement by the Minister of Labour.

Minister Hayward, you have a question from MP Richardson.

MP Richardson, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: PHASE 2 TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Minister in his Statement said that there are 13 new training, career development and employment programmes that have been successfully delivered as it relates to the re-employment strategy. Would the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how many of those 13 programmes existed prior to the re-employment strategy?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, none of those programmes existed prior to the re-employment strategy. They were all a part of the re-employment strategy, and that is why the word within the Statement says “new.”

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: None at this time. Thank you for that [answer]. I have a new question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Do your second question.

QUESTION 2: PHASE 2 TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Given that 650 persons have participated in various programmes—that is, face to face, on the job, online, virtual learning, webinars, internships, apprenticeships and training programmes—we have 70 individuals who have received part-time or full-time employment as a direct result of those initiatives. That gives a success rate of about 10 per cent. Is there any plan to improve upon those programmes? Is the 10 per cent what the Ministry is seeking to achieve? Is that success?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member is measuring success wrong in this regard. If we have 650 people who are better prepared and qualified for job opportunities when they present themselves [for employment], this is certainly success from the Government’s lens. The Member has to appreciate that we are currently in a contracting job market, which means it will be extremely difficult to place persons within jobs as we see a shrinkage of jobs in our economy rather than an expansion of jobs. But the aim of the Department of Workforce Development is to better prepare persons for opportunities. And if these achieve that in terms of better prepared persons for opportunities that exist, we measure that as a success.

If those individuals go on to find full-time employment or part-time employment as a direct result of

the training that has been provided, then it is great. But I do not think that we look and say, *That's only 10 per cent of the individuals who received part-time or full-time training; as a result, we have a low success rate.* I would say that those individuals who have been through that training are very much appreciative of the training they have received and are better prepared to take advantage of opportunities when they do exist.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplementary? Supplementary, MP Richardson?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I thank the Honourable Minister for his response.

Given that their participation is how we are determining whether or not this has worked out . . . Mr. Speaker, I would defer my question for a later written Parliamentary Question. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Do you have a third question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I do not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister Hayward, that brings a close to Members who have indicated that they had questions for you.

We now move on to the next Statement. The next Statement is for the Minister of Education in reference to the University of West Indies.

MP Famous. MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We can hear you. Put your question.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Can you see me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Not yet.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. I am having challenges with my bandwidth here.

The Speaker: That is what happens when you are down in the East.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Go ahead, my friend.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, the thing is, Mr. Speaker, I wore an outfit today that matches your tie.

The Speaker: No wonder your camera is not working. Now I know that explains it all. See? If your tie was red-and-blue, it would work, see?

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right . . . I don't—

The Speaker: Put your question, my friend.

QUESTION 1: UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. All right.

Mr. Speaker, to the Honourable Minister of Education: In a price-conscious environment, Bermudians would like to know what is the tuition or cost of students going to the University of West Indies?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Open Campus that we are having the fair for next week, the average total cost for a bachelor's degree is around \$10,000. The average cost for a master's degree ranges between \$7,900 and \$10,000, and the average cost for a doctorate degree is \$19,000.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Christopher Famous: Are those costs per semester or for the entire course?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Those costs are for the entire course. And that would be in US dollars.

Mr. Christopher Famous: So could you reiterate? Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What do you mean "reiterate"? Do you want to now ask a second supplementary? You can ask a second supplementary.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I will move on to the next question.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Board of the Bermuda College, we often encourage our students to stay in Bermuda and get their first set of degrees here in Bermuda. The question that then comes back is, Are their credits transferable to the overseas school? So what I am asking the Minister is, Are credits from the Bermuda College transferable to the University of West Indies?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question, Member. The Bermuda College and the University of West Indies are currently in negotiations to produce an MOU and articulation agreement. The Bermuda College portion of that is completed, and it is now resting with the [University of] West Indies to complete their part. As soon as they do, we anticipate that all suitable courses taken at the Bermuda College will be able to be transferred directly into the Open Campus curriculum, and you will be able to start that much further ahead if you do enrol.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Further question, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Christopher Famous: A new question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead. Question three.

QUESTION 3: UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, as we heard from Minister Hayward, often Bermudians are overlooked for employment in which they are suitably qualified. So sometimes that yardstick is that, *Oh, the school you went to isn't accredited, blah-blah-blah*. So, what I would like to ask the Minister is, Are UWI courses comparable to other courses around the world? Are they up to scratch? That is what the Bermuda public wants to know.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question, MP Famous. Not only are they up to scratch; they exceed most universities in the world. As I said within the Statement, the University of West Indies is currently ranked in the top 4 per cent of universities worldwide. They are the number-one university in the South American region as well. It is a university that, as persons may or may not know, started as an extension of the University of London, and it has now gone on [their] own right to become a powerful force of post-secondary education in the world, with I be-

lieve it is around 42 campuses within 17 countries around the world as well.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Christopher Famous: Would the Honourable Minister be able to provide proof, as in alumni, proof to show and prove to Bermudians that the University of West Indies alumni have produced some top scholars? Proof is in the pudding, so . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Well, the proof is in the pudding. The university . . . I do not have that information right with me, but the University of West Indies has produced notable, notable persons especially within the Caribbean region. We are talking about politicians, doctors, lawyers, accountants, prime ministers, and the like. So their record is above reproach. And anyone who is willing to go and take a look at them will be able to see from the documentation on their website the types of things that they have done over the years.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Would the Honourable Minister know that in our midst we have two medical doctors who are graduates of the University of West Indies? One is Dr. Roger Wong, and the other one is Dr. Osseyran. Would the Minister know that?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, I would know that. As a matter of fact, Dr. Osseyran is one of the former Bermudian students who took advantage of the relationship that we have with the University of West Indies.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right. That is it. Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister, there is no other Member who has indicated they have questions for you on that Statement. So we will move on to your second Statement. MP Jackson has indicated she has questions for you on your second Statement.

MP Jackson would you like to put your questions at this point?

**QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a quick question. I am just wondering if the Minister might be able to tell us how many lost school days there were last year?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Actually, at this point I am unable to give the exact figure. We can estimate. At the end of semester one, we started the break half-a-week early. And we started the beginning of term two a week late. And then we started the beginning of term three . . . we ended it three-and-a-half days early and started it a week late. So when you add that up, you are probably looking at around 20-odd days.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No supplementary on that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second question?

**QUESTION 2: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, yes, I do. Thank you.

I am just curious. With the very robust online programming for the summer, I am just wondering what has been done to provide additional Wi-Fi access for students who do not have access to the Internet in some areas that may have been identified where there are children and there is not enough Internet access?

So what, if anything, is the Ministry of Education doing to identify any gaps where students are not able to get online for the summer programmes?

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Within the Statement it did speak about there may be opportunities for in-person, meaning actually at-school, learning opportunities. Obviously, we will provide Internet access there. But also in all of our libraries there is complimentary Internet access for anyone who does show up, so that is another option for our students to use as well.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you very much.

The Speaker: No supplementary questions?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No further questions. That was [all of them]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, that brings to a close your questions.

Minister Ming, we have two Members who have indicated they have questions for you today. The first is the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your questions to the Minister?

**QUESTION 1: GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION
TEAM UPDATE**

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to commend the Gang Violence Reduction Team for their services. My question is this: Can the Minister confirm what procedures are in place for the Gang Violence Reduction Team and the CCR Unit to share intelligence if there is nefarious activity or illegal activity involved during their deliberations with people?

The Speaker: Minister, did you hear all of that, or do you need it repeated?

Hon. Renee Ming: I did not get the last part. I just heard—

The Speaker: Yes. You faded out a bit there, Opposition Leader. Could you just repeat it?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What procedures are in place for the Gang Violence Reduction Team and the CCR Unit to share intelligence in regard to nefarious activities and illegal activities, with the Bermuda Police Service?

Hon. Renee Ming: Member, good morning.

The Gang Violence Reduction Team is currently part of IGET (Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement Team), and that would be the only information that is discussed. I am sure you can understand that in some cases it would be of a confidential matter. So they are part of IGET, and that is the only other interaction with the Bermuda Police Service.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What is IGET? What is IGET?

[Pause]

Hon. Renee Ming: I am sorry. Are you asking what does IGET stand for, or what is the actual committee?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What does IGET stand for? Because I do not know what it is.

Hon. Renee Ming: Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement [Team].

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. So that is the only source of sharing information with the Bermuda Police Service, is what you are saying?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

The Speaker: Those were your two supplementaries. Do you have a second question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Second question, yes.

The Speaker: Yes, yes.

QUESTION 2: GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM UPDATE

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am just expanding on what she just said. So if there are illegal activities and they have intelligence of illegal activities, they are not bound to report it directly to Bermuda Police Service? Is that correct?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: That would be correct. And what would happen normally in that situation, Opposition Leader, is that the Gang Violence Reduction Team would collaborate on what would be the best way forward in that situation. I am sure you can imagine that there are several sensitivities around certain things. And having a more structured approach that would have a strategy behind it is what needs to happen because there would have to be [safety protocols] that need to be considered as well.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. I have no further questions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No supplementaries from anyone else?

Good. That brings us to a close of the question-and-answer period for this morning.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I had questions for the Minister.

The Speaker: Oh, yes! I am sorry. I did indicate there were two Members who had questions for you. I am sorry.

Minister Ming, the second Member who had questions for you today is MP Richards *[sic]*.

MP Richards *[sic]*, put your question.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it is Richardson.

The Speaker: Richardson; I am sorry.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I am from a very proud St. David's family who would not tolerate that.

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 1: GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The Honourable Minister in her Statement said that the Gang Violence Reduction Team has proven to be quite effective. My question relates to that statement. Is the policy or intention of this team to reduce the participation in gangs altogether?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Or is it to take us down to no gangs whatsoever, no gang participation? In a brief statement, could you clarify that by, [telling us] what are they doing so well?

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, try and get your microphone off. If you would get it off, it would be of great assistance. Thank you.

Minister, did you hear his question clearly?

Hon. Renee Ming: I believe he asked, What was the purpose of the Gang Violence Reduction Team?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Minister. My point was, is it to reduce participation in gangs to zero?

Hon. Renee Ming: Okay. Well, actually in the second paragraph of the Statement, it says the team "has been charged with the strategic development of prevention and intervention programmes that target our at-risk population." But in addition to that, it would be to show our young people that there is an alternative to a gang lifestyle.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No, Mr. Speaker. Second question?

The Speaker: Yes. You can give your second question.

QUESTION 2: GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

The Honourable Minister in her Statement said that the Gang Violence Reduction Team has a

Coordinated Crisis Response Unit. What is the difference between the Gang Violence Reduction Team and the Coordinated Crisis Response Unit, especially as it relates to membership and cost?

Hon. Renee Ming: The Coordinated Crisis Response Unit has three volunteers and three Gang Violence Reduction Team staff members. The team also has a relationship with the community churches and the Bermuda Police Service. And if they need to, they can set up a hub in a community after any large incident.

The Speaker: Further question, supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Where do the volunteers originate? Are they known? Do we know who they are? Are we able to say who they are?

The Speaker: Is the question, How do you get volunteers? Or do you want to name volunteers? Because I do not know if it would be necessary to always put volunteers out for something sensitive like this.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Fair enough. Then I would amend the question to say, How does someone volunteer to join the Coordinated Crisis Response Unit?

Hon. Renee Ming: They can reach right out to the Ministry and to the Gang Violence Coordinator directly.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And no supplementary. Third question, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Third question. Go ahead, yes.

QUESTION 3: GANG VIOLENCE REDUCTION TEAM UPDATE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The Honourable Minister in her Statement announced the trainees, some 13 trainees who were moving into employment or post-secondary education. Are all of these trainees no longer members of criminal gangs?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, that would be information that I would be unable to answer. The role of the programme is to provide mentorship and to continue to show our young people that there is an alternative to a gang lifestyle. So what we would hope to achieve in that is they choose not to be involved in gangs. But if you are asking me to confirm that, I would be unable to confirm that.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Okay. Thank you, Honourable Minister and Mr. Speaker. No further questions.

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

We are finished with about four minutes left on the clock I think it is.

So we now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, I will try and catch the first voice that I heard through that time.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The Whip? Oh, the Whip.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Simmons, you lead off your team as the Whip this morning. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Honourable House and ask that condolences be sent to, or that I be associated with [condolences to] four families who have lost loved ones recently: the family of Mr. Calix Stuart Mallory Darrell; the family of Mr. Gary Linsfield DeShield; and the family of Mr. Robin David Windsor Joell. And in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, I ask that condolences be sent to the family and of course to the Port Royal Golf Course family from this Honourable House on the passing of Mr. Cal DeRosa. I am sure [with] all of these, and more specifically Mr. DeRosa, that you, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Zane De Silva, the Honourable Neville Tyrrell and the Hon. Lt. Col. David Burch will wish to be associated.

Mr. Speaker—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Please associate me as well.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Yes.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Mr. Speaker, Cal was a staple at the Port Royal Golf Course and in the constituency 32, Southampton West at large. He and all mentioned will be very much missed.

Just to pivot quickly, Mr. Speaker, I ask that congratulations be sent to Mr. Larry Simmons on being awarded the new Hero of the Year Award for the Kiwanis Club of St. George's for saving the life of a friend who was trapped in a submerged car at a road traffic incident. Mr. Simmons is, coincidentally, my nephew. And his act of heroism is greatly appreciated by the entire Bermuda community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Whip.

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan, [I do not see you on] video today, but you are with us, so you have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In the strong spirit of blue-and-blue, those who want to retain our Cup by the official means, let me associate myself with the condolences—

The Speaker: Now, Mr. Swan, you may have just lost your three minutes, you know.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Go ahead and do your condolences or congratulations.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, let me associate myself very solemnly with the condolences offered to my colleague and friend, Cal DeRosa. As Chairman of Bermuda Government Golf Courses, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the DeRosa family. Cal DeRosa's family is the homestead of the house where my mother was born in Whale Bay. And our families, the Hall and the DeRosa families, the Anderson families go back many, many, many, many generations, Mr. Speaker. And Cal did his work with great passion and would make no bones about telling anyone if they were misusing the course, no matter where their standing was in life. And he will be sorely missed, and may he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, my constituent, Ms. Glenda Smith, a cousin of mine from the Phillips family on the Swan and Ratteray connections has passed away, from Suffering Lane. And I offer condolences on behalf of myself and my family. My daughter Zindzi, the councilwoman from St. George's, was very sad to learn this news last Saturday and pass it on to me, Mr. Speaker, very sad to learn of her passing.

I wish to be associated with the condolences to Calix Darrell's family, the family of the late Calix Darrell, whom I have known exactly for 50 years, Mr. Speaker, because I knew him through golf. His family has a long association with golf up here in Sunnyside Park and the Riddle's Bay communities, and condo-

lences certainly to his sister, Glenda, and all of those associated with that family of a rich heritage from Southampton. May he rest in peace, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have your three minutes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to send congratulatory remarks to Cathy Duffy. Cathy Duffy received the Fred Reiss Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to Bermuda's captive industry. Mr. Speaker, as you may or may not know, Ms. Duffy is American International Group's country manager here in Bermuda. She was the first Bermudian woman to gain her CPCU [Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter] designation, which is an international underwriting insurance designation. She has been a trailblazer and a champion for diversity and inclusion. She is Co-Chair of Women of the World, and she was a Fellow of the International Women's Forum [for 2018/19]. She indeed is a trailblazer in any definition of trailblazers globally. She stands Bermuda proud. She has not strayed from her roots. And she is a role model to all women in this country. So I congratulate Ms. Duffy for her international and local achievements and as a bright role model for Bermuda.

I would like to also send condolences to the family of Marjorie Duxbury, a constituent of mine who passed away recently in her 90th year, she was a lovely lady. And I spoke to her on Election Day. She came out to vote. And she was very committed to Smith's Parish.

I would like to also send congratulatory remarks to the Queen's Birthday Honours [List], in particular Allan Trew, who worked in the hotel industry for 40 years. He was a veteran. I went to school with him in Canada. I have known him for many years. He had a career in Canada, and in Bermuda for the Hamilton Princess in Southampton.

I would like to also send congratulatory remarks to Laurie Shiell, who was Executive Director of the Centre Against Abuse and supports [women affected by] violence.

And lastly, I would like to send congratulatory remarks to Jon Beard, who has taught in Bermuda for 40 years. He was Chairman of Bermuda Island Games Association, was a member of the Football Association and Executive, and a coach for many youth teams. He also served as President of the Bermuda Athletic Association and a Chairman the Bermuda Council for Drug-Free Sport.

So again, I would like to send congratulatory remarks to those Queen's Birthday Honours—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Your three minutes are done, sir.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

The Speaker: Would any other Member?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Lister, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to the listening audience.

I would like to start off by sending congratulatory remarks to a constituent of mine, Ms. Amelia Williams, who yesterday celebrated her 90th birthday. Her family celebrated by having a drive-through birthday celebration for her. For that I just want to send congratulations to her to be 90 years young, Mr. Speaker.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send congratulations to the P6 class of Purvis [Primary], who held their leaving ceremony yesterday. To all of the P6 students, I wish them well as they enjoy the summer and then head into middle school in the next school year.

Switching gears, Mr. Speaker, this week we have seen the release of a number of awards, the Best of Bermuda Awards. But before I get to them, I want to send congratulations or recognise a cousin of mine, young Mr. Justin Cann, who won the Raleigh Bermuda's Volunteer of the Year Award. I am showing that without having to be paid for something you can volunteer your time and efforts and be recognised for it.

Back to the Best of Bermuda Awards, Mr. Speaker. I just want to congratulate all recipients of awards in the different categories, but I did want to highlight a few of those recipients, starting with Mr. Marcus George, who is better known as DJ Chubb, winning for the best morning show. I also just want to recognise him because he is also a member of the Bermuda Road Safety Council. On his morning show each morning, whether I am doing an interview or not, he is constantly promoting and pushing the message of road safety out there. So congratulations to DJ Chubb!

Also, I would like to recognise Ms. Jaylen Simons who won an award. And last, but not least, Ms. Joleesa Holdipp, who won the award in the category of best clothes store for young people. Her store is named Klassiq Kidz. I recognise her because she is actually my neighbour, and I have known her all my life. And even seeing where she has come from to where she is today. Many years ago, I remember as a

teenager going next door to her house and buying clothes that she and her mother were selling. So to see them progress from way back 20 years ago to where they are now, that is a story of what perseverance and sticking to your dreams can achieve. So I want to send congratulations to all of those whom I named and all of the other recipients.

The Speaker: MP, thank you for your remarks.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister of Education, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, while I do not normally do birthdays, I would like for the House to send a hearty congratulations to Dr. Bert McPhee, who will turn 95 tomorrow. Dr. McPhee has been someone I have known as a brother for almost 20 years and someone I have learned quite a bit about, and someone whom I can call for advice. If you see him today, you would never think that this man is turning 95 years old.

Mr. Speaker, he came to Bermuda during a time when Black doctors were not in fashion, and he is responsible for quite a few birth [deliveries] at that time when Blacks were being denied to be seen by white doctors. So it is not uncommon that when I am speaking to Dr. McPhee on the street, he will comment on people passing by, saying, *Hey, I remember when they were born. I remember when they were born.* He was that type of doctor. He is very personable; he is very experienced.

Dr. McPhee is a member of my fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, initiated March 30, 1946, some 65 years ago. The fraternal stories that you can hear from Dr. McPhee are legendary, his favourite being the time describing his attendance at the fraternity's 50th anniversary in 1946 where our dear brother, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the keynote speaker. On this Heroes Day weekend, I ask the House to send hearty congratulations to this hero of sorts, Dr. McPhee, on the occasion of his 95th birthday.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also send congratulations to the winners of the Father of the Year Essay Competition. It is a competition that I started once when I became Minister, to highlight fathers in our children's lives at our public schools. This year's Overall Winners are Amariah Kirkos from Harrington Sound Primary, and Tarryn Matthie from the St. George's Prep. The Eastern Zone Winners are Nala Outerbridge and Erynn Paynter. The Central Zone Winners are Jaaziah Astwood and Ann Bolyn (Summer) Maye. And the Western Zone Winners are Dunstan DeSa and Shale Nisbett. All from East End

Primary, Harrington Sound Primary, St. George's Prep, West Pembroke, Purvis and Dalton E. Tucker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade, you have your three minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes. Good afternoon, everyone.

I would like to take this opportunity to express—

The Speaker: Just to remind you to hit your camera button if you can.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Oh, sorry.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to the family of Staurt Lottimore. Mr. Lottimore was actually my handyman. He was at my house not even hours before he passed. He had his issues in life, but I will say in regard to doing the work for me and many people whom I referred him to, he was an excellent painter. He was a great refinisher of cedar. And all around my house I can see the various things that he has done for the last four or five years. So on behalf of my family, I extend my condolences to his family. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other MP wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Leader, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to, unfortunately, bring a message of condolence to this House, one in particular to the family and friends of Mr. Reuben McCoy, who recently passed away. Mr. McCoy was one of those veteran Bermudian musicians, particularly in the area of calypso. He was—

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I would like to be associated.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. And I would with honour associate the Honourable Member, Mr. Weeks, as Mr. McCoy was his constituent before he became mine.

Obviously, Mr. McCoy was a constituent, but I know for a fact and have known for quite some time he is one of Bermuda's great calypsonians. A son of

North Village area and the Friswell's Hill area. He passed away quietly very, very recently. So I would like to ensure that not only is his musical contribution recognised, but that his family is recognised and that a message of condolence is noted for them as well. And Bermuda's veteran musician community has lost one of their great veterans.

I would like to also be associated with the congratulatory remarks to the Queen's Birthday Honours winners, but most particularly two, Dr. Clarence Maxwell, who is one of our Bermudian intellectual giants who was recognised; and also Ms. Laurie Shiell, who is a former college friend of mine and obviously making her mark in the area of care of those who have unfortunately suffered abuse in our community, and championing their cause.

I would also like to be associated with the birthday remarks to Dr. McPhee. The Honourable Member who sits in constituency 13 has eloquently stated Dr. McPhee's contribution to Bermuda. Though he is of Bahamian origin, he is Bermudian through and through with his contribution and his heart.

And I would also like to send a congratulatory remark, Mr. Speaker, to one of my constituents, Ms. Ava Outerbridge, who this month celebrated her 101st birthday. And so I would like to ensure that the record notes all of those persons for the condolences and for the celebratory remarks that have been given.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the comments in regard to Mr. Bert McPhee, please.

The Speaker: Yes, Opposition Leader. We have noted that.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Adams. You have your three minutes. Go right ahead.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I will just be quick and would like to be associated again with those remarks to Dr. McPhee. Dr. McPhee, as the Minister of Education said, is a brother of mine as well, a true gentleman, intelligent, poised, always has a smile on his face, always a pleasure to be around, always has a story to tell and never took a backwards step. Mr. Speaker, when Dr. McPhee speaks, he has a way of captivating a room. You see, I love to hear some of his first-hand stories of his days in the Civil Rights movement or his advice on the keys to a long and healthy life, or perhaps the vision he has and hope for the younger generation. And so, 95 years old tomorrow and still keep-

ing well. So I would like to wish him a very, very happy birthday.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say a few words.

The Speaker: MP Jackson, you have your three minutes.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too would like to be associated with the birthday greetings for Dr. Bert McPhee. He is also my godfather, and it has been wonderful to know that I have had family support around for my entire life. And the fact that he has reached 95 is just wonderful comfort to know that his longevity continues to be there as a support for the community, as well as myself.

I would also like to associate with the birthday greetings to Dr. McPhee from the Opposition Leader, his constituent in the Opposition Leader's area. So there are also good, happy wishes going out from the Opposition Leader as well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to congratulate the team at In Motion School of Dance, led by Lizz Pimentel, for putting on a recital and show under very difficult circumstances. I did not realise just how much work goes into that, and I wanted to congratulate her, her team and the parents, who contributed countless hours behind the scenes to ensure that these dancers, boys and girls, are exploring the world, learning of things and committing to developing a skill that will guide them well through life. So I was just incredibly impressed by her and her team, and all of the parents and volunteers. Congratulations to all of the performers as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It sounds like the Deputy Speaker. Deputy, you have the floor, sir.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulatory remarks on Dr. McPhee. I would venture to say that Dr. McPhee is probably one of the best-looking 95-year-old persons in the world.

[Laughter]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the remarks on Reuben McCoy. I can recall Reuben McCoy in the hotel, coming down doing cocktail parties, social parties and the like. A one-man-show. But he really entertained the crowd.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send out condolences to the family of Albert Nisbett, who just passed, I think it was on Wednesday. And I am sure he will be sorely missed by his life partner, Cynthia Woods, and family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, sounds like MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Make your contribution.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I would like to associate myself with the remarks with Ms. Duffy, Dr. Maxwell and Ms. Laurie Shiell-Smith. But what others failed to mention is that all of those persons are Berkeleyites. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to wish [happy] National Heroes Day to all of the young people who have been on the front lines administering vaccines and taking COVID-19 tests, because they are surely the ones who are out to put our economy back in order. And often they get forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I was asked by somebody from Somerset to tell the people of America *thank you* for finally acknowledging Juneteenth, which celebrates the emancipation of slaves in America.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, on another note I would like to thank my club, the St. George's Cricket Club, for staying to the wicket for Cup Match 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear, Famous!

The Speaker: Any Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none of us.

As we move on from here, let me just add my remarks to the condolences that were expressed the Joell family. Mr. Robin Joell was a long-standing member of the Sandys community for many years before he was moved out to, I believe, Paget.

And to the family of Mr. Reuben McCoy. He was actually someone I considered a friend, and I was always uplifted by chats that we had, and of course entertained by his musical talents that I think will—I *know* that will be sorely missed in our community.

With that said, we now 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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: I believe we have three Bills to be introduced today. The first is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Minister, would you like to introduce your Bill?

FIRST READING

DEBT COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second Bill this morning to be tabled is that for the Minister of Education.

Minister, would you like to table your matter?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. Is my sound okay, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Sounds fine.

FIRST READING

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I am 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 Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And the final Bill to be introduced this morning is from the Minister of Transport.

Minister of Transport.

FIRST READING

BERMUDA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That now moves us on.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Opposition Bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Private Members' Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are no notices of motions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The first Order of today is in the name of the Minister of Finance. It is the second reading of the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none. Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Government wishes this Honourable House to now give consideration to the Bill entitled National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Act 1998 provides for the establishment, administration and regulation of private occupational pension plans for workers in Bermuda. The Act became fully operational on the 1st of January 2000, and regulations were introduced in 1999 to provide for such matters as registration of plans, plans for self-employed persons and pension fund investments.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that in 2020 Government made two amendments to the Act in an immediate response to the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on our country. Firstly, in order to help struggling workers and businesses, the Government made amendments to allow for the suspension of contributions to pension plans for a year. Secondly, in a move to further assist people with financial challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Government made an amendment that allowed people to withdraw up to \$12,000 from their private pension plans.

Mr. Speaker, both of the aforementioned actions were taken by the Government after balancing the degree of financial hardship experienced by many people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic versus the impact of their not contributing towards their pensions for 12 months and then reducing the size of their pension by making early withdrawals. Given the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on people's economic and social well-being, and the high degree of risk that people would fall into extreme poverty, Government made the decision to amend the Act and provide our people with access to financial relief.

Mr. Speaker, as at the 14th of May 2021, the Pension Commission reported the following statistics for the temporary pension withdrawals of up to \$12,000:

- There was a total of 19,885 pension withdrawal applications submitted to pension administrators.

- A total of 16,713 applications were approved.
- The total value of approvals was approximately \$126.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to see that the demand for the temporary withdrawal is significant and that the Government made the correct decision to step in and help people through these most unprecedented challenges that threatened people's livelihoods.

Mr. Speaker, since March of 2020 the Government has taken swift and decisive action to limit the spread of the virus. As a result of this, coupled with strong support and compliance by the general public, the impact of this virus on the health of Bermuda's residents in 2020 was not as severe as that experienced in many other jurisdictions.

However, largely as the result of a few instances of noncompliance with the rules, in March of 2021 the Government had to impose significant restrictions on persons and businesses in Bermuda to protect the health of its residents. While the Government has recently been able to lift many of the restrictions and businesses have been able to reopen, the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt throughout the Island. This was reinforced by the fact that during this year the Government continued to make payments in the Temporary Unemployment Benefit Programme.

Mr. Speaker, in order to further assist those who are finding it difficult to make ends meet, the Government is looking to expand the scope of financial hardship withdrawals to include a further one-time withdrawal of up to \$6,000 during a specified period. It is intended that the following limitations will be established:

1. Withdrawals will only pertain to vested contributions up to \$6,000.
2. The programme will only pertain to defined contribution plans registered under the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Act 1999. Eligibility cannot be extended to members of defined benefit or annuity plans due to the nature of such plans.
3. Applications can only be made from the 1st of July 2021 through the 30th of June 2022.

Mr. Speaker, as Honourable Members are aware, the purpose of a pension plan is to accumulate pension contributions and for them to be locked in to be available as a source of revenue during retirement. The rationale behind this is to prevent plan members from using their pension funds as an easy-to-access source of income for purchasing consumer goods and services. The intention is for workers to regularly save a portion of their income during their working life so that they can have an income in their later life when they want to work less or retire.

Mr. Speaker, while this Act allows the temporary withdrawals to be made available to persons, it is intended for those who are either unemployed or underemployed and in great need of income. I must

strongly advise people not to utilise temporary withdrawal unless there is a real need for such funding.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to emphasise that no pension plan, no matter how well designed, can make up for a shortfall in contributions. To provide maximum benefit in the future, the total funding going into the pension plan needs to be adequate. People need to be aware that if they decide to tap their pension savings now, they risk that their total contributions may not be sufficient to fund their retirement later in life. In essence, money that has taken years to accumulate, if withdrawn early, could take years to replace.

Mr. Speaker, while each person's financial need and individual circumstances differ, as they weigh the pros and cons of taking advantage of a temporary withdrawal, it is critical that they review all other available options. This could include using emergency savings or taking a personal loan before moving forward with an early withdrawal even in the most challenging financial circumstances. Despite the immediate cash an early withdrawal provides, a person's financial health may be negatively affected in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill that we have in front of us is intended to allow plan members who are in an exceptional, dire financial situation and have no other alternatives to gain access to their private sector pension funds. For those who are not in need, I would like to say the following: The journey to retirement requires patience, discipline and the need to contribute to a retirement plan on a regular basis. If you take funds out of your retirement plan early, you lessen the prospect of reaching your income goal in retirement and increase the prospect of becoming a burden on either your family or the government.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the Government's commitment to supporting the people of Bermuda in this challenging time. But we encourage the people of Bermuda to consider it carefully and then, if necessary, use it wisely and well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

It is now 2 minutes to 12:30. It is 12:28. I am going to suggest that we pause for lunch now. And when we return, the Opposition spokesperson can lead off at two o'clock.

Are there any objections to that?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Premier, would you like to lead us into our break?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do adjourn for lunch until the hour of 2:00 pm this afternoon.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none. The House stands adjourned until 2:00 pm. Thank you, Members.

Proceedings suspended at 12:28 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

BILL

SECOND READING

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: Members, it is now 2:00 pm and we can resume the debate that was in process before we broke for lunch, which was the second reading of the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

For the listening audience, the Minister of Finance had made his presentation to introduce the Bill and the Opposition Leader will lead off the response at this time.

Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will begin by also thanking the Minister of Finance for his thorough brief and his overview. Generally, the Opposition supports this financial hardship legislation. In essence, we are talking about the people's money, and if they are in financial difficulties, we agree that they should be able to access these funds, with reservations. But at the end of the day, as the Minister said (in my words) we are borrowing from their future from an economic point of view. In essence, when you withdraw the \$6,000 you not only lose the \$6,000, but you also lose any potential earnings that are derived over the period in which the funds would have been locked up and, as a consequence, your benefits will be reduced accordingly.

I will not be too long, just a couple of questions. And my question is this: When it comes to processing these applications for the \$6,000 lump payment, will they be automatic or will the service provider have discretion in regard to the payments? And will they assess the payments based on hardship, unemployment or underemployment, or is it just an entitlement?

I am asking that because I know in the last tranche when they had the \$12,000 distribution, a number of people took money out to invest and, in essence, they did not even meet the hardship criteria. They just saw an opportunity to have some of their

pensions unlocked and they invested it in other instruments in the market or used it to do renovations to homes, et cetera. So, I wonder if that applies at this point in time as well.

The other question that I have is when it comes to . . . can the funds be returned if they are working and they want to, in essence, make an automatic contribution to make up for the funds that were withdrawn? Will they be able to do so and do so without any penalty at all?

In essence, Mr. Speaker (as I said, I was not going to be long), we support the Minister's position and we support this legislation. It is unfortunate that we have to get to this point. As was said, everyone is struggling through COVID-19. The economy has not recovered as yet, and we are just beginning to see positive economic shoots for our economy given that we are about to slowly re-energise our economy.

So, those brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, are my comments in regard to this piece of legislation.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh, yes?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Adams, go right ahead.

Mr. Jache Adams: I just want to make sure you hear me.

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Yes, we hear and see you.

Mr. Jache Adams: All right, perfect.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to add that the Government recognises these are difficult times for many Bermudians. Whether it is at their job or in their home, many people are constantly asked to do more with less and, quite frankly, it is exhausting.

Every day I hear from hard-working, law-abiding, taxpaying Bermudians who have done nothing wrong, who have done everything asked of them, yet find themselves struggling to make ends meet. And then there is the Government, Mr. Speaker, with the unenviable task of governing during a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic with no blueprint, against a deadly virus that is constantly changing, with limited resources at a time when our people need us the most. There are no easy answers, Mr. Speaker. But I am proud to say there is a plan, an Economic Recovery Plan.

Mr. Speaker, we discussed the plan at great length last session. And, as you will recall, one of the

key takeaways was that it aims to get us back to a balanced budget and a stable economy within three years. Mr. Speaker, the reason this is relevant is because while we are focused on our roadmap to recovery, it is not lost on us that some families cannot wait that long because they have got obligations to meet today. So, once again, as a Government, we stepped up.

Mr. Speaker, we stepped up and worked around the clock for three days straight last year to establish an unemployment benefit programme as quickly as we possibly could to provide assistance for our people. We stepped up and ensured that former Southampton Princess employees received their just compensation in a timely manner when their former employers did not [step up]. We provided funding through the BEDC to provide small and medium-sized businesses assistance in their time of need. Last year we made it possible for individuals to access a portion of their private pension to meet their current expenses.

Mr. Speaker, we stepped up and introduced an Economic Investment Certificate and digital nomads to help increase the local population and promote foreign investment into our economy. Had we not done this, the impact of COVID-19 could have been much worse. We stepped up and helped usher in a recently announced BELCO [rate cut] for all customer groups. We introduced an economic stimulus plan where companies awarded government contracts had to hire unemployed Bermudians for up to six months.

I can go on, Mr. Speaker, but here we are, once again, answering the call.

Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of this further withdrawal initiative of up to \$6,000 as I empathise with those in need of immediate financial relief. And so this Government continues to put measures in place to help the country and its people, as we prepare to move beyond the pandemic.

But I must add, Mr. Speaker, that I also recognise that this is not an ideal situation and, therefore, I must echo the Minister and express caution. I urge persons to use these funds on an emergency basis. And if they must access the funds, I encourage them to do so responsibly. I have seen this dance before.

Mr. Speaker, in my years at the bank I can remember many times a client constantly calling several times a day eager to get the loan proceeds only to have that same client avoid picking up [his phone] after things went financially wrong. I have seen how what feels like a win today can quickly turn into years of financial burden. And so, again, I urge people to use these funds responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, it must also be emphasised that this is a one-time withdrawal. Therefore, if an individual decides to withdraw \$4,000 and then something comes up months later, they will not be able to withdraw the remaining \$2,000. There was a misunder-

standing with several people last time, so it is important we clarify that this is a one-time withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker, also, as the Minister mentioned, this initiative is for those without a private defined contribution plan and, therefore, those in a defined benefit or annuity plan are ineligible. This is simply because of the way the plan was negotiated, agreed upon, and effectively set up. It is not the Government simply deciding to let some individuals have access to funds and others not. Those in a defined benefit plan can, however, apply for financial hardship through the Pension Commission, which allows for a withdrawal to assist with medical expenses, rent or mortgage delinquencies, educational expenses, and funeral-related expenses as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will end by assuring the public that this Government will continue to do all we can to serve the people of Bermuda, continue to plan for tomorrow while managing the challenges of today, and we will continue to work together to seek opportunities that will assist the people of Bermuda during these unprecedented times.

Thank you.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, yes?
MP Jackson, I believe.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to know whether we could have a reminder that Members should be speaking from verbatim, you know, from their hearts, and not from written notes.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Well, let me just clarify that.

Nothing is wrong with using notes, but they should not be *reading* from speeches. So, if they have notes, folks can refer to their notes. But they should not be reading speeches. If it is a written speech, that should not be accepted.

So, that is just a reminder to all Members, that the only time—

Mr. Jache Adams: Did you see my notes?

The Speaker: The only time the stuff is read directly is Ministers giving statements, Ministers giving presentations of a matter related to a Bill, all right?

Does any other Member wish to speak to the Bill before us this afternoon?

Any other Member?

None, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank both the Opposition Leader and MP Adams for their contributions.

Addressing the questions posed by the Opposition Leader, the processing of applications will not be automatic. The individual would need to make an application to their fund plan administrator and the administrator would process the request accordingly. No assessments will be made as to whether or not a person has a legitimate need or not. There is a certain degree of honour being assumed in this process.

I would also say that the idea here is to provide for a simple process that allows people to get the relief that they seek in as expeditious a time as possible. And so, introducing an element of subjectivity to the evaluation of applications, in my view, would certainly slow down the processing of applications. I do have to believe that I have used fairly strong language in my brief and the fact that the Opposition Leader was broadly in support of my words I think indicates to people that the Government and the Opposition are of a similar view with respect to the intent behind this opportunity to take money from their funds and people should consider it very, very carefully.

There was a question asked about whether or not folks can make up contributions. That option is always available to persons. Under the current construct, folks can make . . . [they] have to make mandatory contributions (assuming ordinary operating circumstances), and also have available to them the opportunity to make a supplemental or voluntary contribution, whether it is every pay cycle or less frequently than that.

Inasmuch as there are people who decide for reasons of hardship to avail themselves to this additional hardship withdrawal, I would strongly encourage them that when they are back on their financial feet, that they give strong consideration to making contributions to their plans. Those amounts, should they be voluntary, would fall into the voluntary pool and those monies may be available to them in the future should they have another urgent need. The voluntary pool monies are always available to persons.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:14 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole House for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [National Pension Scheme \(Occupational Pensions\) Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 24(9) of the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Act 1998 by inserting a new paragraph (d) to provide a one-time withdrawal of up to \$6,000 by a member or former member of a defined contribution pension plan or a local retirement product who has not attained the normal retirement age, whether or not that member received a refund under section 24(9)(c).

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Any further speakers?

Mr. Cole Hedley Simons, Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

[Pause]

The Chairman: We cannot hear you, Mr. Simons, please put your microphone on.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My question to the Minister is in regard to [clause] 2: If an applicant has not enjoyed the first tranche, i.e., the first \$12,000, are they able to apply for both options now? So, can they apply for \$18,000 if they had not applied for the first \$12,000? So, the \$18,000 would be \$12,000 from the first tranche and \$6,000 from now.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: This amendment has a maximum withdrawal of \$6,000. So, the answer is no.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. That is all I have. Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, MP Pearman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member Pearman, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I just have one question for the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Minister, during the debate you indicated that this was really a (and I am at clause 2, [new section 24(9)](d) for the lump sum of \$6,000)

during the debate you indicated this was really intended for unemployed or underemployed, if I heard you correctly. Was it considered applying that restriction to these applicants or was there a reason why we did not apply that restriction?

That is my question.

Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, it would be . . . the number of persons who are potentially seeking to use the benefit, it is our view that it is primarily unemployed and underemployed persons. However, I would not be surprised if there are other persons, by virtue of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the economy more broadly speaking, may be employed, but who, because of difficulties incurred over the course of the last year and a bit found themselves having fallen behind in some of their commitments and need to access their funds in order to bring themselves more current.

So, again, we chose not to decide to put a definition of hardship in the legislation because it becomes administratively burdensome for the administrators who are not charging for this (in the first instance) and it also introduces a potential delay for the recipients who were having a hard time in getting their money.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister, for that very clear answer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, no further questions.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister, do you want to move the clauses?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

It is approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. 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 appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried: The National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 2:20 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill [entitled] the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There appear to be none.

Thank you. So, that matter is done.

We move on to the next matter, but Members, I am going to seek your indulgence. On the Order Paper the next item is the Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021. But if you look at [Order] No. 3 it is the National Pension Scheme (Refund) (Temporary) Regulations 2021, which really relates to the item we just finished. Am I correct on that, Minister?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Right. And I would want to ask that we have your indulgence to let this matter be done now being that we have just completed the main portion of it.

So, Members, with you indulgence, can we have the Minister go and do [Order] No. 3 now and then we will come back to [Order] No. 2?

Are there any objections?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No objection.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, will you do [Order] No. 3 now and we will come back to [Order] No. 2 after?

So, Members, we are now going to do the consideration of the National Pension Scheme (Re-

fund) (Temporary) Regulations 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be given to the Draft Regulations entitled the [National Pension Scheme \(Refund\) \(Temporary\) Regulations 2021](#) proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by sections 24(9)(d) and 69(2) of the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Act 1998.

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

DRAFT REGULATIONS

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (REFUND) (TEMPORARY) REGULATIONS 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, having provided a comprehensive brief on the substantive legislation, I am not planning on saying much more than to say that these Regulations apply to the legislation that was just passed by the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Not on my side, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader. Minister?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the said draft Regulations be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

The said notice will be sent to the Governor.

Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Draft Regulations entitled National Pension Scheme (Refund) (Temporary) Regulations 2021 were considered by the whole House and approved.]

The Speaker: That brings that matter to a close.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Order Papers that were sent out in advance of the legislation reflect the gender of the new Governor, please.

The Speaker: Yes, okay. No problem.

Members, we will now move back to [Order] No. 2, which is the Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance. Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Bill now before the House is the Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021.

This Bill amends the Economic Substance Act 2018 in order that Bermuda's economic substance legislative framework continues to meet the evolving requirements of the European Union's [EU] Code of Conduct Group (Business Taxation).

Mr. Speaker, following the approval of Bermuda's Economic Substance legislative framework the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the Forum on Harmful Tax Practices (FHTP), and by the EU Code of Conduct Group, Bermuda successfully completed the fully equipped monetary mechanism review by the FHTP. As required, Registrar of Companies has continually engaged with both organisations in relation to the continued appropriateness and effectiveness of Bermuda's economic substance regime.

Mr. Speaker, during that ongoing assessment of Bermuda's economic substance regime, as well as the equivalent economic substance regimes in other comparable jurisdictions, including among the Crown Dependencies and other Overseas Territories, the EU Code of Conduct Group has determined that the scope of the economic substance regime must be expanded to include all forms of partnerships and not just those partnerships that have elected to have separate legal personality.

Mr. Speaker, in line with the Government's ongoing commitment to meeting high standards in compliance with international requirements, and to ensuring that Bermuda is not added to the EU List of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes (the so-called "blacklist"), the Registrar's team and the Attorney General's Chambers have developed the specific legislative amendments to the Economic Sub-

stance Act 2018 to address this requirement by the EU.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the Economic Substance Act [2018] set out in the Bill before the House today seek to address this EU requirement to bring all partnerships into scope and to ensure that the Registrar of Companies [ROC] has the necessary investigative and enforcement powers to ensure compliance with the economic substance requirement by all entities in scope of such requirements.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments have been developed by the Registrar's team and the Attorney General's Chambers in close consultation with both the EU and the OECD. It should be noted that there has been ongoing dialogue with relevant bodies on the proposed legislation. Following the initial tabling of the Bill, Bermuda was required to make further changes to the proposed legislation to clarify the range of partnerships in scope. Therefore, further amendments to the Bill will be moved on the floor. Both the EU and the OECD have completed their preliminary assessment of the amendments and have now indicated that they have no concerns.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed by this Bill are in line with EU and OECD stated principles. And with those brief comments, I invite other Honourable Members to participate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, as you know, I work in international business, and I know that this Economic Substance [Amendment Act 2021] is just another by-product of the EU and the OECD's crack-down on offshore financial centres. I accept that. And if we as [an] international jurisdiction want to play in their space, that is the compromise. I take the view that we have to take [these steps] so that we can do business in the EU as well.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that this is a difficult one and we in the Opposition and our international business partners ABIR and ABIC are watching closely and are doing work that needs to be done to ensure that our reputation as a jurisdiction is not compromised.

So, we support these changes, but we have a few questions that I would like to have addressed, and I think the questions can be addressed in Committee. My questions arise around the partnerships which have no legal entity. We know that the definition of a local entity has been expanded to include, basically, partnerships that have been approved by the Regis-

trar of Companies and the Bermuda Monetary Authority [BMA] in regard to approved legal entities, and then there are those partnerships that do not and have not applied to have a legal entity status. So, I would like for the Minister to provide more examples of the latter, i.e., those partnerships that do not have legal entity status and how he envisions their reporting in those situations, how will that take place in regard to non-incorporated (for a better word) partnerships that are not legal entities.

And with those few remarks, I just have those questions but I understand it is something that we must do to preserve our position in the international insurance market and international financial service industry. I am aware that the industry has this on their agenda and has been working diligently to get Bermuda across the economic substance line so that we are out of the crosshairs—in this instance, of the EU and its Code of Conduct Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, MP Cannonier.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes, you have the floor.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I just want to congratulate the Minister.

The Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, can you turn your camera on for us?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: The camera is on.

The Speaker: Oh, oh, okay, you are down there, okay, okay. Your name is up higher on the other one as well.

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: My apologies.

Yes, I wanted to just say to the Minister congratulations. I know that this space is not an easy space for the Minister. Having had challenges in the past in my dealings myself in my former capacities, it is good to hear the news that has been presented today.

You know, this is a space where, quite frankly, the goal post, as we have said, continues to move and how we have identified the unfairness towards jurisdictions like Bermuda. But again, I just want to con-

gratulate the efforts that the Minister has put forward in getting us to this point.

It would be good to hear a little more from him, Mr. Speaker, about his general feeling as he has been negotiating, writing letters and the likes, in speaking with the EU, the OECD—his general feeling as we go forward. Not to say that he can forecast the future, per se, but if he foresees any other challenges that might be coming our way so that, of course, we can collectively work together to ensure his success at this time.

So, again, congratulations and it would be good to hear, as I said, a little more about what he sees coming down the chute.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Cannonier.
Does any other Member—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker. MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Opposition Leader and MP Cannonier have spoken, I just want to add two very quick points.

Firstly, let me also offer my commendation and congratulations to the Minister of Finance. I know that when he has to represent Bermuda abroad that he does so for all of us. And when these matters are dealt with competently and smoothly, it is always a good thing.

Secondly, just as to the Bill itself, my understanding of what this is doing, Honourable Minister, is that it is clarifying the range of partnerships that are now in scope for the purposes of economic substance. And that clarification is a broadening of the partnerships that are now in scope. That question dovetails with the question already put by the Opposition Leader as to the examples of partnerships that will now be in scope that were not previously.

But my question more specifically is: Does the Minister understand this to be a broadening rather than a narrowing?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Honourable Minister and congratulations again for [bringing] this up.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None other.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their contributions. I was not sure if the Opposition Leader wanted me to address his question in Committee, but I am prepared to do so now and will let him know that the e-filing system that we have in the Registrar of Companies, which is the method by which economic substance filings are filed, will be modified to allow partnerships without a separate legal identity to file. So, the system will be changed or updated to allow for the necessary filings to be made appropriately on our system.

MP Cannonier asked a question about *How's it going?*, I guess, is probably the summary version of it. I will say that the frameworks are live documents, so to speak, and they continue to evolve.

And in answering MP Pearman's question at the same time, I have seen very few instances in my 31 months in doing this job where anybody—whether it has been the EU or the OECD or anyone else—has actually ever sought to narrow the scope. It has always been in one direction, and that has been to broaden the scope of the oversight and the requests that they make of us to ensure that there is compliance to the regimes that they each have put into place.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:35 pm

[*Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman*]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole House for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Continue.

[*Inaudible interjections*]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman.

The Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 amends the Economic Substance Act 2018 by

expanding the definition of “partnership” to include all forms of partnership in Bermuda and not just those partnerships that elect to have a separate legal personality, while also ensuring that purely local partnerships are not subject to the economic substance requirements. This will ensure that all such partnerships, other than purely local partnerships, as well as companies and LLCs that carry on a relevant activity in Bermuda will be in scope of the Act.

Mr. Chairman, I now move clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is the standard citation clause.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the Act by amending the definition of “partnership” to include all types of partnerships, including those partnerships that have not elected or cannot elect to have separate legal personality. It also amends the definition of “local entity” to include local partnerships and inserts a definition of “local partnership” in each case to provide that the economic substance requirements will not apply to those partnerships that are carrying on business only in Bermuda, which are not registered as exempted partnerships and which are not part of an NME group.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 2

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I also will need to amend clause 2 as follows:

Clause 2 will be amended by repealing and replacing paragraph (a) as follows:

“(a) by repealing and replacing the definition of ‘partnership’ as follows—

“‘Partnership’ means—

“(a) a partnership to which the Partnership Act 1902 applies;

“(b) a limited partnership;

“(c) an exempted partnership;

“(d) an exempted limited partnership; or

“(e) an overseas partnership;

“but shall not include a local partnership;”.

The Chairman: Okay, let us deal with the amendment first as this is required.

Any comments for the amendment, against the amendment?

Any unreadiness with the amendment?

Any objections to the amendment being—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I would like to make a comment.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: For exempt partnerships . . . and I am just putting an example because I am

trying to get clarity in my own mind. If I am an expatriate CFA and my colleague is a CFA and CPA, and we say, *Let's just form a casual partnership and do a business*, and we are not a legal entity and we will do a business both in Bermuda and overseas as a loose partnership based on our professional experience as qualified CFAs and CPAs with 40 years' experience, how will this be managed as an unincorporated (I am using my words) partnership under this Act? And how will the filings take place for those two individuals?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I am advised, Mr. Chairman, that they would not be an exempted partnership—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: —they *would* be an exempted partnership—and the partnership where there is more than one . . . I am sorry, an exempted partnership is a partnership where there is more than one non-Bermudian.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Ah! And as to filing, how would that work? Because they are not a legal entity.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: They would need to make an application under the Exempted Partnerships Act [1992] to form the partnership.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: To form the partnership. And after the partnership is formed . . . oh, you are saying . . . so they must form a legal entity?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The general requirement is that they have to register . . . they must register the partnership—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: —as an exempted partnership.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So, can you give me an example, then, for the partnerships that do not have to be registered which will fall under this umbrella?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That would include local partnerships that are only doing business in Bermuda and are not part of an NME group.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

And in those situations, who will make . . . because they are local they do not have to do the filing, correct?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Correct.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. That is it.

The Chairman: Any further speakers to this amendment?

Any objections to the amendment being approved?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None at all.

The Chairman: The amendment has been approved.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I have the further amendment to [insert] clause 2A.

The Chairman: Continue.

[Pause]

The Chairman: You may continue.

INSERTION OF NEW CLAUSE 2A

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Okay. After clause 2, insert the following:

“Consequential amendment of Registrar of Companies (Compliance Measures) Act 2017

“2A The Registrar of Companies (Compliance Measures) Act 2017 is amended in the Schedule by inserting after the last entry the following—
‘Partnership to which Partnership Act of 1902 applies.’”

That is the amendment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Any speakers to this amendment in 2A?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No objection.

The Chairman: There is no objection.

Any objections to approving the amendment?

There appear to be none.

The amendment has been approved.

[Motion carried: Clause 2 passed as amended.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: So, Mr. Chairman, process-wise, do I go ahead and move the clauses again?

The Chairman: Well, you do not have to, those two amendments . . . the other amendment has been approved. But you can move clause 1 to be approved and you have got to do [clauses] 3 and 4. Clause 2 is already approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clause 1 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 1 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clause 1 is approved.

[Motion carried: Clause 1 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, clause 2 and clause 2A, by virtue of them being amended in the amendments, are they fine? Or do I need to move—

The Chairman: Well, they are both approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Okay. I will go on to clauses 3 and 4, Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, clause 3 provides for transitional matters.

And clause 4 provides for commencement.

The Chairman: Any comments on clauses 3 and 4?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No problem.

Just a question. “Partnership” means a partnership that has not elected to have special legal personality in accordance with section 4A of the Partnership Act 1902.” Given that the Minister of Finance has indicated that local partnerships are the only partnerships that are not allowed to have legal personality, why do we have this here, this definition? It is just like . . . it contradicts in my mind, unless I need further clarity, the issues raised in 2A because, at the end of the day, “have separate legal personality” applies to all foreign partnerships, overseas partnerships, exempt partnerships and not local partnerships.

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I am consulting with the technical officers, is that all right?

The Chairman: Okay. Yes, sir.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I believe there perhaps may be a bit of confusion on the part of the Opposition Leader. I am advised that most general partnerships are local and the decision to have a partnership without a legal personality is an election that is taken.

The Chairman: Any further comments?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Just for clarity . . . so general partnerships are allowed to have . . . local general partnerships can have legal entity, local general partnerships can opt not to have legal entity, am I correct?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Well, general partnerships are local.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. But can the general partnership elect to have legal entity in Bermuda, if it is a local one?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: It can, but that is an election that has to be made by the partnership.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay, that is fine.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further comments, Members?

There appear to be none, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 3 and 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 3 and 4 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 3 and 4 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 3 and 4 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. The preamble is approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

Any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as amended.

[Motion carried: The Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with amendments.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 2:47 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

Thank you, Deputy.

Honourable Members, are there any objections to the Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as amended?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: There are none. Good. Thank you.

That brings that matter to a close.

We now move on to the next item on the Order Paper, which is the second reading of the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister of Health?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I am trying to turn on my video.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Let me just grab the order, forgive me.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 provides for a revision of aspects of the fixed penalty regime for the enforcement of COVID-19 preventive measures. This will enhance the enforcement provisions to ensure the safety of our residents, in particular, the most vulnerable.

The purpose of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is to provide further for the creation of a ticketing regime for breaches of the Public Health and Quarantine legislation that relate to COVID-19 in order to more efficiently enforce penalties for activities that present a material risk to the public. The regime follows the legislative regime for traffic tickets found in the Traffic Offences (Penalties) Act 197[6] where the hearing of any defence to an alleged breach will be in the courts. The aim is to relieve pressure on the courts in the enforcement of a select number of offences.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that amendments introducing fixed penalty regimes for Public Health and Quarantine legislation were passed in March of this year. However, upon further development it was determined that further changes were needed for operational purposes.

Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage globally and locally. While the country is increasingly close to achieving community protection through vaccinations (or herd immunity in technical public health terms) there still remains, Mr. Speaker, a continued need for protective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect lives. Despite COVID-19 fatigue in the population and an increasingly vocal minority who feels disenfranchised by these unfortunately essential public health measures, compliance with public health and traveller rules continues to be high. However, when breaches occur, enforcement continues to be difficult because of the prolonged process required to prosecute offenders through the courts.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment remains focused on the enforcement of COVID-19 breaches that are considered to be material breaches. The types of COVID-19 breaches that occur can be categorised in three types: serious breaches that immediately endanger public health and safety; material breaches that present high risk of COVID-19 transmission; [and] minor breaches that introduce risk of COVID-19 spread.

Mr. Speaker, serious breaches such as knowingly exposing others to a communicable disease, will be prosecuted through the courts as required by the relevant legislation. Minor breaches, such as not wearing a mask in a designated place, can be addressed with a simple reminder by any member of the public, [Bermuda] Regiment [officer] or police officer. And material breaches fall between the other two in nature and risk. Such breaches include, for example, withholding contact tracing information from a health officer or participating in or hosting a gathering above the number legally allowed.

Mr. Speaker, the material breaches are the type of offences to which a fixed penalty is intended to be attached. This Honourable House has already supported the Government in the view that such

breaches can be better enforced with a fixed penalty or ticketing regime by trained officers.

What this amendment does is restrict that power to issue the ticket to a police [officer] or [Bermuda] Regiment officer and to make some additional consequential changes to the Bill, such as:

- It provides for a police officer to issue a public health penalty ticket where a person commits an offence and it removes this power from public health officers. And this enables fixed penalties to be in effect sooner through the police powers and trained officers.
- It provides for public health penalty tickets to apply to the various offences under the Public Health and Quarantine Emergency Powers Regulations.
- It increases the ticketing penalty from \$1,500 to \$3,000 for offences of refusing to answer questions as required by a police officer. This is to cover instances where an individual may refuse to identify themselves so that the fixed penalty can be issued to the proper person.
- And it provides for the Minister to prescribe the content of a public health penalty ticket in regulations. The form of the public health penalty ticket will be published by the Bermuda Police Service on their website. This is so that the current fixed penalty tickets used by the police can be used for the purposes of public health penalty tickets.

Mr. Speaker, more importantly, the Bill ensures that persons who pay the penalty within 28 days do not receive a criminal conviction and it also provides for persons to contest a ticket in court where they believe they are innocent.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health consulted with the Bermuda Police Service and the Director of Public Prosecutions as well as the Magistrate's Court and with the Attorney General's Chambers in the development of the policy for a ticketing regime for the enforcement of COVID-19 enforcement measures. I am grateful for the assistance of all of those.

Mr. Speaker, when we do go into Committee, I will be making two minor amendments which I will have forwarded to the Clerk, if not already done so, momentarily.

The Speaker: I will have to confirm so we can make sure they are circulated.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I will take my leave.

The Speaker: Okay. I am going to ask if there are any other speakers, and in the meantime, I am going to confirm that we have seen those amendments because they will be needed for when you go into Committee.

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the amendments. I have not received any amendments. I do not know if the office has.

The Speaker: Okay. At this point we have no notification.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Minister, both Ms. Beale and Madam Clerk have indicated that we have not received them and, as you know, we will need them to circulate it.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I will do that right now myself, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay, and you can send it so we can get it on the SharePoint so all Members will have a copy of it.

Would any other Member wish to speak?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whilst that confusion is dealt with, I have a few brief points. I do have some questions in Committee for the Honourable and Learned Minister, but just a few brief points on the Bill.

It sometimes helps just to step back and look at what the Bill is doing for those who have not had a chance to look at it in detail. Effectively, this is an amending Act that is amending two pieces of legislation. It is amending the Public Health Act 1949 (as amended) which is the Act that encapsulates most, but not all, of our COVID-19 provisions and deals with the fixed penalty regime.

And secondly, this amending Act today is amending one aspect of the Quarantine Act 2017, which deals with another cluster of COVID-related laws, namely, those dealing with quarantine.

If one steps back and looks at this at a high level, I think the common-sense question that one might pose is, given that we have been told this would . . . that the vast majority of COVID-19 restrictions are to be lifted, why some 15 to 18 months later are we now making changes to the penalty regime? And so, I think that would be the overarching question that I would respectfully direct to the Honourable and Learned Minister to address in response.

Looking a little bit below the surface, the Bill is effectively doing two substantive things. One is that it is increasing penalties, although, in fact, it is increasing those penalties by the amendments, which I understand are making their way to the Clerk of the House now. But my understanding is that the penalties will increase, in clause 8, from \$3,000 up to

\$10,000. And in clause 11, it will increase from \$1,500 all the way up to \$10,000. So, again, without being overly simplistic, what this amending Bill is doing is seeking to give greater teeth—financial teeth—in terms of penalties to breaches of the COVID-19 restrictions. And, again, we might ask why that is coming now. Why are the amounts going up?

It also might be sensibly pointed out that whilst one is increasing the applicable penalties, those penalties, of course, are only ever paid if someone is, in fact, charged and convicted. So, one must not forget that simply putting the numbers up to add some teeth does not really do much if the enforcement is not there in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, the second thing that this Bill is doing—and in my view it is a sensible thing—is recognising that the penalties for breaches of these various regulations, wherever they may be or whichever Act they may flow from, is not something that is likely to lead to a criminal conviction, but can be dealt with by financial penalty, and that the criminal courts only get involved in the event that a person wishes either not to pay the penalty or chooses to contest whether they should pay the penalty.

So, those who say, *Okay, I've breached something*, they pay the fine, and it does not flood the criminal court with additional cases relating to COVID-19 breach[es]. And given that we all very much hope we are on the downslope of COVID-19 in Bermuda or, perhaps even at level ground, below the downslope, certainly it is a hope that makes evident good sense not to clog up the criminal courts with criminal actions.

Mr. Speaker, I have addressed the amendments, and no doubt we will hear more about those in Committee when we get there. As I say, I do have a few points to deal with in Committee. Whilst the Honourable Minister is making amendments to the Bill, may I also take the liberty of pointing out that in the Explanatory Memorandum, right at the end, there appears to be a typo in that I think it is *supposed* to say that the change in threshold for prosecution is changing from “fails without reasonable excuse” for a term “wilfully omits.” And I think the word “omits” should be there. And that is the very last sentence of the back page of the Explanatory Memorandum. But that is how I read it. I think the word [omits] is missing.

The final question that I would address before Committee is to invite the Minister just to clarify what exactly is going on because here we have a Bill seeking to amend the penalties. In a moment we are to discuss an Order seeking to extend emergency powers. What we do not have in front of us today are any regulations relating to the rules that are supposed to come into effect on Sunday. And so, perhaps the Minister could just kindly update the Honourable House as to when we may see the regulations that are coming into effect this Sunday.

I do not know if any other colleagues wish to speak, but thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to

the Honourable and Learned Minister for her presentation on this Bill.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other MP wish to make a contribution?

No one else.

Minister.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sorry, Deputy. Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is signed, or it is being enacted, to increase penalties based on quarantine. But let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I think the Government has done very well last year in the way they handled this pandemic and, to some extent, this year. But I have some concerns, Mr. Speaker, about the quarantine.

Mr. Speaker, I think the quarantine is discriminatory based on the vaccinated and the unvaccinated. I think, Mr. Speaker, you probably read or heard on television last night that some of the hoteliers have instituted a programme where those that are unvaccinated will be tested every seven days and the vaccinated will not. I really, in my heart, do not believe that the hoteliers meant to put policy in place that is discriminatory, but it is. Certainly, I agree with testing every seven days, particularly in the hotel and the restaurant industry because I think we have to keep our customers safe as well as each other safe, Mr. Speaker.

So, I would urge the hoteliers . . . and I think the Bermuda Industrial Union came out with a statement, and I endorsed it, that we are not against testing, but we cannot discriminate because, Mr. Speaker, it has been proven that even though you get vaccinated you can pass the virus on. We saw or read yesterday or heard on television about the ship, and I think it was four crew members came down with the virus and they had been vaccinated. So, that proves the point that everyone should be tested whatever the policy is.

Mr. Speaker, I have problems with the quarantine—the discriminatory part of it—where if one left the Island and before they can come back they have to get what is called a TA approval form and that is to have booked up into a hotel. That is if you are unvaccinated. The discriminatory part about it, Mr. Speaker, is that if you do not have this form, then I am told that you cannot get on the flight.

Well, I do not think that any . . . you cannot deny me my right to come home. When I get home what you do is something different. But that cannot . . . that . . . it has got to be . . . common-sense tells me it is against the law. They cannot deny me. Once I have been tested as to policy and I have got my ticket

and all my travel documents, I should be able to get on that flight.

The other concern I have is if I come back home and I test negative and I am not vaccinated, I have to go in a quarantine for 14 days at my expense. But the person that comes back who is vaccinated and tested positive for the virus, they can go home and quarantine at home and if they test negative after the fourth day, then they can go out in the public. And I know if I have this wrong the Minister will correct me. Well, that is discriminatory because if I am coming back, vaccinated or not, and I test negative, then I should be able to go home and quarantine.

I am not against quarantine, Mr. Speaker, because I believe and I agree with our Government's objective in trying to control this pandemic so we can get back to normal. I am right there, no problem with me. And I feel that if one comes back, whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated, and they test positive, they should be able to quarantine at home provided the environment at home is right. You do not want to send a person home when you have got four or five others home, you do not want to do that. But there has got to be some balance here.

And if I was one of them, I would not mind wearing the bracelet. And I know the bracelet is very successful because I do know of a lady that had the bracelet on and apparently she got a call while she was home and I guess those who were monitoring the bracelet said to her, *Where are you because we can't see you?* And the lady replied, *My computer's down.* So they could not see her. That goes to the point that, hey . . . and I think that was good that they called her to find out where she was. And that could be done for anyone, Mr. Speaker.

Now, you are going to always have some people, like we have in society, [who] like to break the law for whatever reason. You know you are going to have them. But the point I am trying to make is do not penalise the 95 [per cent] or 97 per cent of people who will abide by all the rules as we do on a normal daily basis, Mr. Speaker. I think the job that Dr. Weldon is doing in testing is above the top. And I really get mad when I hear people . . . and it only happens to people, particularly Black people. When something does not go their way, they question what another Black is making, nothing to do with the qualifications. But I think Dr. Weldon is doing an exceptional job and I think that [the] foolish talk must stop. It has got to stop, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a problem with this . . . this . . . the Minister said . . . I do not know if she was not sure what she was saying, and I do not mean it out of any disrespect. The Minister said if the fine has not been paid within 28 days there is no criminal record. And I see what the . . . and I know what the Act says. And I think she said it right. There is no criminal record if it is not paid within 28 days, but they will take action to get the money. I understand that.

Mr. Speaker, some people will say, *Well, why are you leaving the Island if you can't afford to pay for a hotel when coming back?*

Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite obvious. Mr. Speaker, on this little 20 square-mile Island you get rock fever. And the only cure for rock fever is to take a trip. Some people just have enough money for their ticket and everything else is on the credit card. Now I am not saying this is a good decision or not, but that is what people do in order to alleviate that rock fever. And they come back and they take a year, 18 months, to pay it off. That is us. That is what we do. So, do not tell people not to take a trip because those that have the funds, they take the trip, and that privilege should be given to everyone.

Now, the other thing, Mr. Speaker . . . and I understand the quarantine. I am not knocking it. But my concern is a person going into quarantine for two weeks and they are paying anywhere from \$3,000 to \$4,000 or \$5,000 depending on what facility they go in. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, are the two weeks of wages they lose. Most Bermudians cannot afford that. One thing this Government has done—and I applaud it—there was never, ever a charge for our students returning home. It has changed a bit because I know when the policy first came out, students did not have to quarantine. And the change that they have made—and I agree with it—that students will quarantine, but at the expense of the taxpayer. I have no problem with that, Mr. Speaker. So, the point I am trying to make is students never had to pay, Mr. Speaker.

But the one that really, really, really concerns me is against my human rights. I think is discriminatory when you tell me that if I do not have a TA I cannot get on the plane. Maybe the Government will come with an amendment to that because that part of that . . . and I have fought discrimination all my life, Mr. Speaker. And I will continue to do that. And I am one that cannot stand by and watch discrimination on anybody at this stage in my life and at this stage in the life of all of us. Discrimination in any form is not right. We have to fix that.

Again, and I say, you know, I have praise for the Government. Our ratings as far as how we have handled this and the total number of vaccinations is [giving us a] high ranking in the world. But this little piece about mandatory quarantine, I think we can fix that and do it better. We can do that part better.

And the other part is do not tell me or anyone that you cannot come home because you have not booked up at a hotel coming back home. That is not correct. You just cannot tell me that and I cannot accept that.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I must say, with wearing these masks, it has been a benefit to us all. And I would wear the mask as long as I think it is necessary, even if the Government says you do not have to wear a mask tomorrow, I would wear it because one thing I can say is I have not heard about any flu and I think it

is because people are wearing masks you have not heard about the flu anymore. I think it is a good thing to do, to wear the mask, particularly when you are in areas where you feel or you should be protected, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, again, to the hoteliers, you must test everybody. Being vaccinated does not—does not—guarantee you, does not exempt you, does not stop you from passing the virus on. So, I would ask that any discriminatory policy, whether it be the private sector or whether it be government, that we not do that. We should not be doing it, not at this stage in our lives. And, again, let me be clear. I understand the objective. I agree with the objective of the Government. But certain things we just cannot fall away from some principles. We have got to stick to the principles. We have got to treat . . . and I know it is not the intent of anyone, particularly the Government to treat anybody unfairly, but this one . . . this comes . . . it does not come . . . it is discriminatory and we should not have it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes?

Mr. Vance Campbell: MP Campbell.

The Speaker: MP Campbell, you have the floor.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of the measures put in place by the Government in this battle against the COVID-19 virus has always been to protect the health and well-being of the citizens of Bermuda. The intent was not to penalise individuals financially. The intent was not to create criminal convictions on individuals' records. So, as has been pointed out by the Minister and also the Opposition spokesperson for Health that spoke earlier, this Bill strengthens the teeth for those who violate the various COVID-19 protocols. But it also allows for a method to enforce the regulations without creating a criminal conviction on an individual's record.

Mr. Speaker, I wish there was a test that we could apply to those re-entering or entering Bermuda that would tell us whether or not they would adhere to the mandatory quarantine protocols at home. I really do wish we had a test as to whether we could hook someone up to a machine, or a bubble appeared above their head that showed us their intentions. But we do not have such a test. So, how do we know who will violate the quarantine regulations?

Mr. Speaker, I really like this ticketing process for what would be called material breaches. And what I am hopeful [for] is that we will gather data in the initial phases of this that we can utilise later. What do I mean by that? Well, we all know that we cannot continue; our economy cannot survive, particularly the hospitality industry, with heavy restrictions in place.

So, what I am hoping is that we will gather enough information to show that we can effectively use a ticketing system in conjunction with the increased penalties to move away from the mandatory quarantine process in a government facility and allow people to quarantine at home initially and then, eventually, move away from having to quarantine all together. As I said, the country cannot, our economy cannot, continue to bear the losses that are being caused by COVID-19 in general and that may be occurring specifically due to the restrictions that we have in place.

And I am 100 per cent behind protecting our people and protecting our borders. But I do understand that for some this will seem overly burdensome. So, I am hopeful that we can utilise this ticketing method, gather some data, that will allow us to move away from the quarantine, the mandatory quarantine process in a government facility. And I will put it out there. I do not think the intention is that this will be with us permanently. I do not think the intention was that we would be fighting COVID-19 [for] 16, 17 months after our first cases arrived, but we are.

So, again, I will conclude my brief comments by saying that I am hopeful that we will utilise the data collected, particularly around this ticketing process, to move away from the mandatory quarantine process in a government facility and allow people to quarantine at home. But again, I will state we do not have that test. It would be lovely to have that test that helps us identify those who will break protocols if allowed to quarantine at home.

So, I am cautious in that optimism because if we do not respect the protocols then it will result in total devastation of our economy and this is something we will take a long time to recover from.

And with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I conclude and thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Campbell.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

An. Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Lister, I see you there.

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to add a few brief comments to this debate today, Mr. Speaker. I believe the objective and the intent of the health order and the quarantine order, I think the public of Bermuda all understand and get what the objective is—to keep our borders safe and to locally, entirely, keep Bermuda safe. And I do not think anyone can disagree with that, Mr. Speaker.

But as has been mentioned by the previous speakers before me, Mr. Speaker, the intent, even though it is unintended, has caused discriminatory issues between those that are vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak I have to speak on my principle of anti-discrimination. That is based on age, sex, religion or choice. Discrimination is wrong, no matter how or where it is, Mr. Speaker. So, while we all support and understand the precautions put in place, it has unintentionally caused discrimination that affects a sector of our community. Much has been made, Mr. Speaker. And as an MP, I have heard, I have gotten the calls, the messages. I have heard the cries of how this is affecting the community in Bermuda.

And Mr. Speaker, again, I cannot agree [with] or support any discrimination in any form. And I urge that another solution or other options be used so that we are not creating discrimination and to a wider intent or effect, Mr. Speaker, division, because it is causing division in our community. And at a time when we should be coming together we should not be having division dividing us at this time, Mr. Speaker.

So, much has been said and it is not much more that I can say against this because I cannot support discrimination in any form, Mr. Speaker.

Those are my brief comments. There is much more that I may speak on later outside of this debate, Mr. Speaker, but those are my comments. I cannot support . . . I can support the policy, I can support the intent and the objective to keep our Island safe, but the unintended consequence of creating discrimination and creating division I cannot support.

Mr. Speaker, those are just my brief comments. And thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to voice my concerns in this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons, you have the floor.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The strength of our Government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was based on taking the people along with us, explaining why we are doing

what we are doing, how we are doing what we are doing, and what the next steps and what the next phases were. When that approach was taken, the people came with us, the people walked with us and they were comfortable with us.

We have to get back to that. And when I look at how the . . . some of the . . . there naturally will be resistance in quarters, regardless. But I believe that the way that we have presented this to the public has amplified and heightened tensions and divisions and created fear and uncertainty that could have been prevented. And I think that this is a learnable experience for us.

I am not going to be very long, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that the Honourable Member who took his seat just before me, as well as a Member who spoke earlier . . . and I am reminded of a saying. *If you want to go far, go with the labour man.* And I am going with the labour man this afternoon, the Honourable Member from constituency 5, because I believe he summed up my concerns and the concerns of many of my constituents. He summed up many of the concerns that are being felt throughout the community.

We have some work to do, Mr. Speaker. We have work to do to be able to bring this country back together, to be able to get people united behind getting our economy moving and protecting our borders. We have a lot of work to do. We have trust to regain, we have confidence to regain, and we have to find a way to bring the people with us along the way with the understanding [that] strong decisions do need to be made. Strong decisions have to be made, but strong decisions that are understood, explained, and have the broadest possible church [participation] in the decision-making process creates stronger decisions, creates better outcomes, creates better buy-in, creates wider buy-in and wider advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the calls against discrimination, we have seen the calls against the 28-day limit on the fines. And, you know, I support that which was said before. I am not going to belabour the issue. But I do think that we have some work to do to be able to get back to that time when we were moving as one country with one understanding of where we are going, with one understanding of the final destination and how everyone fits into it, regardless of whether we are vaccinated or unvaccinated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Simmons.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have the floor.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I am duty-bound to speak on this piece of legislation out of respect for the many, many calls that have come from my constituency, and not just from my constituency, but from Bermudians far and wide.

Mr. Speaker, I think some of the salient points have already been made in terms of the effect that this legislation has on the general public. While I have to say the Government is tasked with doing what they believe is best for their people and in their best interests, sometimes what they do has, as someone pointed out, unintended consequences. And in this particular instance, many of the policies that have been put in place to protect our people have likewise created a divide where many of our people are screaming and shouting that they are indeed being treated differently.

And they feel as though they, especially those who we have heard other Members say, are unvaccinated at this point in time. They feel as though many of the rules that are being put in place are targeted at them, whether that be the case or not. Even though, you know, governments are doing what they believe is in the best interests of all, because of the way the regulations are being meted out, or the legislation is being meted out, it operates and treats members of the public differently.

And so, I would hope, as do others, that we can find that balance that would allow all of us to enjoy treatment from the legislation in the same way. I will put it that way. Because when you have legislation that says to a particular group, because they have not travelled down a road, that the Government believes it puts them in a state that makes them less likely to cause unintended consequences, they are being treated differently. Meaning, as has been pointed out, they will find themselves, if they were to travel and come back, being in mandatory quarantine for 14 days, even if they test negative for that entire 14 days.

So, many have asked me, in fact, I walked in Hamilton this afternoon and I had one of my constituents stop me in the annex and say, *I don't get it. How can a vaccinated person who comes back and is positive be allowed to go home? And I, who am unvaccinated, have to spend an inordinate amount of money and be in a facility for 14 days?*

And though the person said to me, *I know that you cannot say or speak out against your Government, I am here to tell you that as my representative I expect you to be fighting and doing something so that the treatment against us is different.*

And the person even went on to say how they had a conversation with their physician who tried to suggest that they get a vaccination and he said, *I believe I already had COVID-19. I believe that I have the antibodies. Yet I am asking you to give me a test to see whether or not I have immunity against COVID-19 now. And you're saying, 'Oh, but you should still get vaccinated.' Please explain to me how that is going to improve my status.*

He said his doctor did not and would not, but having had his doctor for about 20 years, he said that he understood that she understood the logic in his words, but would not answer. And he believes that various factors have come together to operate in accord in a manner that would sort of *coerce* (that was his word), coerce persons like himself to get vaccinated. And so, he said, *I didn't vote for a Government to treat me like this.* And he went on to say that in the next few months, when his wife has finished doing whatever degree she is doing, if he finds himself subjected to the same treatment, he along with his family will pack up shop and leave because he is not going to live in a country that discriminates against him and his family.

So, this is a story that is being repeated over and over again. And I know that my Government has been a Government which listens to the people. And so, being his voice and the voice of many others, I would ask that we continue to listen to our people and continue to try and bring about amendments that meet with the accord of everyone because when we would seek to put someone in isolation or in quarantine, as you would call it, who is positive but has been vaccinated and who can run the risk of spreading COVID-19, yet someone who is not vaccinated and is negative, but has to be quarantined, and quarantined in a facility where they have to expend an inordinate amount of money, in the words of many of the people who are crying out, something is wrong with that.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I think others have said it. We understand this Government is not trying to, I guess, if you will, discriminate against people. What it is trying to do is create an environment that is going to be the best possible environment where we can move forward with little fear of having the same outcomes that we have experienced in the recent past.

However, the measures that are being put in place are not, I guess, if you will, bringing about the feeling that what they seek to do is what actually will happen, especially when you have policies that would allow persons who are positive to go home and persons who are negative to be quarantined in a shelter until such time that 14 days are up, even if they have never, ever tested positive. People do not accept that logic, especially when you see from the World Health Organization, you see from the Centers for Disease Control [and Prevention] where it has been made patently clear that persons who are vaccinated spread COVID-19, can still contract COVID-19, can still die from COVID-19. And regardless of whether or not their viral count is at a certain level, which I guess makes people feel comfortable, the truth is that the virus can still be spread and others are at risk of contracting the virus.

The amendments that have been made that have sought to change the fines from \$3,000 to \$10,000 and \$1,500 to \$10,000 some may argue are

draconian. I would hope, and I have confidence, that the Minister will continue to look at those amendments with a view to where they can be modified to enjoy broader support from the public at large, while still trying to mitigate against the risks of COVID-19 and how that may pan out in terms of the economic impact and the like, that she will continue to do so.

I have no doubt that she will continue to do so because what the Bermuda public needs to understand is that as a Government all of us are there to give our views, and through sharing our views we must try and bring about an outcome that meets with the accord of all of us and meets with the accord of the general public. Because that is who we serve, that is who put us here, and it would be, I guess, an act less than a duty if we ignored that. And so, in other words, I am saying we are duty-bound to do that because the people put us here to represent their interests—all interests.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think, as the other Members have stated, this is a tough thing, it is not something that is met very readily when measures are put in place that, though not intended, create a divisive environment and treat people differently and, therefore, operate in a discriminatory manner. And I just want to say no one is trying to do that and that we accept that that may be the outcome and so our job, my job, the collective job, is to continue to deal with this legislation in a manner that brings about the changes that we want, but allows persons to be treated equally under the legislation.

And with those words, Mr. Speaker, I think that I should stop my commentary.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: Yes, MP Cannonier, you have the floor.

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

I have taken to heart, just listening very intently and closely to what I heard thus far, and I am pleased to hear the varying comments that are being made. Certainly, it is not always easy for Government, in the position that it is in, having to make tough decisions.

But what I really want to get to is where is the consultation that is taking place as to how we are coming to the conclusions as a Government in meting out these rules and regulations as we go forward? With so much being said, not just in social media, but so much being said in the newspaper and other areas, direct emails and the likes, I am beginning to wonder exactly who is being consulted here. Is it just Government making these decisions? Or are we consult-

ing on a general and a broader basis to really understand, as you have already heard in some of the comments, the people are out there who are walking about and living amongst these restrictions that are being made?

More importantly, you have heard comments to the likes of, *I'm going to side with Labour, if I am going to make a decision*. And I commend that, I understand that very, very clearly because some of the same people that are talking with Government officials are also talking to us as an Opposition, trying to come to a clearer understanding of how we have gotten to where we are today.

And so, it behoves me, and I am trying to understand who it is that is consulting here so that we understand better how we are coming to some of these conclusions. And it really is not clear exactly who is making these decisions. I will say that on the precedence of this, we are just now looking at an amendment that is taking fines from \$3,000 to \$10,000; from \$1,500 to \$10,000. Now, there must be some logic and some rhyme or reason to why we have gotten to this place. But we have not heard clearly, as of right now, even to the amendment, how did we come to increasing it to \$10,000? Someone needs to explain who made this decision. Someone needs to explain how the committee or the board or whoever it is that is meting out these conclusions and who is involved in the consultation of getting to the position that we are in.

This Government has always purported that it is listening to the people. What we are seeing meted out at this time is clearly not the case at all. So, where is this? Someone needs to say who is being met with for the consultation. Who are the people that are making these decisions? And why are we in such a contentious position right now? Because it appears as if we are making decisions without even looking at people's constitutional rights.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Or listening to caucus.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Listening to caucus, whatever it is.

You know, I recall in so many cases where we as a Government were called out and in many, many cases, *Have you consulted enough?* And we clearly see now that there are signs with this Government that we are not getting to a broader consultative position, so we are making decisions on behalf of the whole of Bermuda. And listen, this is a tough position that this Government finds itself in, when it is faced right now with some serious opposition. And it will be nice to hear from our leaders explaining exactly how they have gotten to this position.

And I say that on the backdrop of this, we were going to move forward on June 6. That was pushed off until June 13. Now it is being pushed off until Sunday. So, who is consulting here? What is

happening? The results clearly are showing that people are not happy.

And I agree with many folks, you know, when you are making decisions as a Government you know not everyone is going to be happy. But there is a general consensus as you walk about the street that things are not where we would like for them to be and people are divided over this particular issue.

Now, what concerns me, and I am basing this on historical decisions that have been made, what concerns me is that while we are looking at the potential of restrictions and the likes on the unvaccinated, that this Government is probably going to make a decision that will place restrictions on the vaccinated, rather than lifting the restrictions on the unvaccinated. How do I come to that conclusion? I will give you an example.

Not too long ago, restrictions were lifted for St. Regis so that they could go ahead and work during the quarantine period. The restrictions were lifted only because of pressure from the public that they rescind the decision of those restrictions so St. Regis could go ahead and work. And I came out and wrote an article and said, *Listen, the right decision was to allow St. Regis to go ahead and work. The better decision would have been to not just let St. Regis work, but to let others in similar positions to also work.* But what this Government did was it went and restricted the very liberties that it should have allowed to happen in the first place. Why? Because they did not consult—clearly—enough.

We saw where we had the Minister at loggerheads, in my estimation, with the Premier and a decision that had been made. And so the confusion was there. And what happens in the end? More restrictions were put in place upon the same people that it should not have happened. And that is my concern as we move forward, that what is going to happen with this Government . . . due to pressure they will place restrictions on the vaccinated and liberalise the unvaccinated, when they should be liberalising both.

And so, this Government is going to have to make some serious decisions. Sunday is looming and people are anxious. And I commend everyone for speaking their mind on this particular issue. You know, I do not know if the Whip was involved or not in this particular situation with the Government, but obviously we have concerns. And we are hearing these concerns from both the Government and the Opposition—that we are in a position that is not palatable for the people of Bermuda. And this Government needs to find a way to answer the questions. Rather than skipping around the questions, they need to answer the questions with some qualifications. That is not what we are getting.

So, I am hoping that, as we move through this here, Mr. Speaker, that we will get more answers to the questions that are being [asked] and hopefully that

we will be able to allow Bermuda to move forward as best as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Are there any Members who would like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: MP Tyrrell.

The Speaker: MP Tyrrell, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to express some of the concerns that I have and some of the concerns that some of my constituents have shared with me.

Mr. Speaker, it has already been stated that our earlier (and I will use the word “earlier”) handling of the pandemic was done in a way that brought the people along with us. And I definitely agree with that because we took time to talk to people and, as you can see, you know, we brought people along with us. Again, [this was] another example of us listening to the people.

Mr. Speaker, governing is never easy. It is not easy and you never please all the people all the time. But it certainly, during my time in Government, has never been the intent to discriminate blatantly (if I could use that word) against any one particular class or set of people.

Mr. Speaker, when you have people who may deliberately be looking to break regulations, sometimes stronger methods have to be put in place. It is all part of governing. As I said, it is not easy. I am really . . . I am not in favour of blatant discrimination, and as I said, I do not believe that this has been our intent. However, some regulations and policies may give an impression of discrimination because you have to try and protect the whole. But there is going to be a core that maybe is not coming on board with that. As I said, I try to say that no law—no one law—is a one-size-fits-all. It does not work like that.

However, when legislation is done in the interests of safety, in this instance of protecting our borders, I have to support it. I will support it. Much has already been said in respect . . . you know, and I respect the opinion of my colleagues. Everyone has a right, you know, basically to say how they feel, just as I have the right as well.

However, I feel duty-bound to support the legislation in the interests of protecting our borders. I have listened to my constituents, as I said. A lot of them fully understand which way the Government or how the Government is trying to handle it. I can only

appeal to persons at this time to give some time and look at the legislation that we are putting out because it is in the interests of protecting our borders and the entire Island.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will be very brief. I do not need to say much more. Everyone else has said things that I could certainly repeat, and I thank you again for the opportunity.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Tyrrell.

Would any other Member wish to speak?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Scott?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up where my colleague left off. And I want to start by saying that my other colleagues that have spoken—MP Burgess, MP Foggo, MP Lister III, MP Campbell—raised valid and justifiable concerns. And I think that today what I would like to do is try and paint a picture and, although not trying to get any one individual or group of individuals to agree, but just to understand the logic, or at least the concept, of where the Government is coming from when they make this decision.

So, I would like you, if you could, to imagine two circles, with one circle being supervised quarantine and the other circle being home quarantine. And on the outside of those two circles you put one circle on either side and in that circle have it labelled WWH—what is the worst that could happen? And so, when we look at supervised quarantines, what is the worst that could happen with supervised quarantines? And that has already been highlighted. And let us talk about the discrimination aspect.

So, let us say that it is seen that this is a discriminatory policy. There are the courts that will help decide that. So, let us say that there is a court case and what is the worst that could happen with supervised quarantines, meaning that this court case could be found to be. So let us say that somebody in the public or somebody brings a court case to challenge the validity, to challenge whether or not this infringes on human rights, and it goes to court. And let us say, in the worst-case scenario, the courts decide in favour of that challenge. What is the worst that happens? That means that the supervised quarantine would have to fall away, find another way about it, and let us

shift over. Let us say we then shift over to the home quarantining. So, you have lost a court case and, more than likely—and I am speaking freely—there would be the validity of the Government's decision-making in other future controversial decisions.

So, now let us shift over to the home quarantine option. What is the worst that could happen? And so, we sit there and let us say the worst that could happen is that home quarantining does not work. Someone somewhere slips through the cracks, not necessarily somebody that gets out of quarantine, but somebody that has invited a friend over, finds out after that they have spent together in a confined area that they are positive and the virus gets out and we end up with 2,000 new active cases and 25 people dead.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has said, looking at the two worst-case scenarios, neither one of them is favourable. We believe that we are okay with the loss of a court case; but we are not okay with the possible loss of life. And so, for those that listened to my speech earlier when I spoke about the creation of an environment and how Herculean of a task it is, this is a prime example of where the Government is trying its best to create a safer, the safest possible environment given the situation.

My understanding of the medical statistics and data that has been presented to me is that when you get 50 per cent of your population vaccinated, immunised, it is difficult to have an outbreak. If you were to get to the 60 per cent threshold, it is unlikely for one to have an outbreak. But when you get to the 70 per cent and/or higher, it is highly unlikely—that is the term that was used. And the way that I interpret the words “highly unlikely” in this context is all but impossible to have an outbreak.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is why the Government is pushing to get persons vaccinated—so that we can protect, not just our borders through a quarantine programme or initiative of some sort, but so that we can have as much safety and protection within the community without having to have controversial and/or strict border management. And because the reason that we focus on having strict border management is not to discriminate, is not to make life hard, but is the creation of that safe environment and to protect that safe environment from the introduction of a variant. And my understanding . . . and I put the disclaimer that I am not a medical professional, but my understanding of the information and the medical data that I have seen is that it is all about risk mitigation. You are not going to get it to zero; but you can try to see how close to zero one can get it.

And to protect against that variant, to mitigate or reduce the risk of a variant, this is where the supervised quarantines come in. Because my understanding from the infomercials, from the medical data, from the research that I have done, is that it is more likely for a non-vaccinated or unvaccinated person to be carrying or create a variant than one from a vaccinat-

ed person. Therefore, we have to ensure that a variant is not introduced, that one does not slip through the cracks. But while we are below the 70 per cent threshold, where it would be unlikely to have an outbreak of any sort, we have to protect our borders. And with Bermuda being an island, we are uniquely able to do that.

And one thing is clear today. Although we may all agree on the implementation or the plan of what we are doing, we do all agree on the objective. The overall objective is to protect our people. We all agree on that. And it is okay that we do not all agree on the implementation aspect of it.

But also, the other thing that we all agree on is the gravity of the situation. There are literally lives at stake. The Government cannot afford to get it wrong. We can afford to take criticism. We can afford to take critiques. We can afford to be unliked, because this is not about votes, voting or party support. This is about ensuring that another Bermudian life is not lost.

Therefore, I appreciate, I respect and I support my fellow colleagues who speak out and share their concern and their unreadiness. Because we, as a Government, hear you! We are listening to you! And although we may not be able to implement the plan that everybody would like to see, that everybody can agree with, we are implementing a plan that we wholeheartedly believe will achieve the objective of keeping us safe and protecting lives within this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want you to know and I want those who are listening to picture those two bubbles—the supervised quarantine versus the home quarantine—and ask yourself, if they do not work, if home quarantine does not work, what is the worst that could happen? And if supervised quarantine does not work, what is the worst that could happen? And our understanding, our interpretation as a Government is that with supervised quarantine, the worst that could happen is that we lose a court case. But with home quarantine, we believe that the worst that could happen is that we could lose more lives. And that is a risk this Government is not willing to take. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Is there any other Member who wishes to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

No other Member.

Minister Wilson.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank honourable colleagues for their comments and their submissions.

I think it is important to note that one common thread throughout the discussions that have taken place concerning the Bill entitled the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 (aka Fixed Penalties

Act) is that we all are keen to ensure that we take steps to keep Bermuda safe, we are all keen to ensure that we take steps to protect lives, and we are all keen to make sure that we take steps and measures that will help to support economic growth. Nobody in this room, or nobody in this country, would not support those three principles. And in that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that as we debate the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021, that we keep those three principles at the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act, there were a couple of questions raised that I would like to address real quickly, not necessarily in the order they were raised. But one is with respect to an apparent slip as it relates to the explanatory memorandum, the last paragraph, the last sentence. The Honourable and Learned Member, Mr. Pearman, was correct and that is a matter that can be . . . a word was missed and that can be addressed.

It is also interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that one of the questions that was raised is, Why now? And I want to remind colleagues that when we came back in March and dealt with, I guess I want to say the first part of this Bill, we realised following that it would have allowed for the ability for public health officers to actually participate in the ticketing regime. However, further discussions, particularly as it relates to operationalising, we realised that we certainly wanted to ensure that the police have the power. They are the ones who are up and down the streets and patrolling our country and making us safe. So between the police and the Regiment, we wanted to ensure that the ticketing regime could be extended to them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there was another issue that was raised with respect to the level of consultation considering the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act. And as I indicated, we consulted with the police. This is something that they have been wanting for quite some time. The Department of Public Prosecutions [DDP], the Attorney General's Chambers, as well as the senior magistrate. So there was certainly extensive consultation concerning this particular amendment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled that we are all on the same page and share the same common thread of wanting to keep Bermuda safe, take steps to improve our economy which has been heavily impacted adversely through COVID-19, as well as of utmost importance is the protection and preservation of lives. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that this Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 4:02 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021**

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Public Health Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2021](#).

Minister Wilson, you have the floor.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to move clauses 1 through 9, please.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 10 of the principal Act to insert subsection (2), which provides for a police officer to issue a public health penalty ticket where a person commits an offence under Part VA and any instruments made in pursuance of that Part, and the offence committed becomes known to the police officer.

Clause 3 amends section 107B of the principal Act in subsection (7) to insert a reference to Part VA, which will cause Part VA to apply to the various offences in the Regulations made pursuant to section 107B.

Clause 4 amends the principal Act by repealing and replacing section 107D to provide for persons to pay the penalty provided in the public health penalty ticket without the need to admit the offence.

Clause 5 amends section 107E of the principal Act to remove reference to the need to admit the offence. A new subsection (3) provides for the Minister to prescribe the content of the public health penalty ticket, and the Commissioner of Police to determine the form of the ticket and publish it on the Bermuda Police Service website.

Clause 6 repeals section 107F of the principal Act as police officers do not need to produce identification.

Clause 7 amends sections 107G, 107H and 107J of the principal Act to replace the reference to "Public Health Officer" with "police officer" in order for police officers to take over the responsibility for issuing public health penalty tickets from the Public Health Officers.

Clause 8 amends section 107H(2) of the principal Act to provide a penalty of \$3,000 for the offence of refusing to answer questions as required by a police officer, such as the identity of the individual who the police are talking to.

Clause 9 amends section 107J of the principal Act to remove reference to the need to admit the offence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. MP Pearman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member Pearman, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Before I pose questions, I understood that the Minister intends to make an amendment to clause 8. I am not sure if that amendment is still being pursued before we ask questions about clause 1 through 9.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Pearman.

Minister, do you have an amendment?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I sent that off to the Clerk. It is with respect to clauses 10 and 11. That has been sent.

The Chairman: Okay. We are fine.

Mr. Scott Pearman: With respect to the Honourable Minister, the document I received says amendments to clauses 8 and 11(9).

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And that does make logical sense, Minister, because if you look at clause 8 of the Bill, that is where you see the reference to \$3,000 which is being amended to \$10,000.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That amendment is already proposed in the existing amendment. But what I was proposing when I spoke previously was that there will be further amendments to the Bill at clauses 10 and 11.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. In which case, Honourable Minister, we have not received those. We have received Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 amendments, proposing two amendments. The first amendment was to clause 8, which is the matter where the \$3,000 sum is being amended upwards to \$10,000. The second and final amendment proposed is to amend clause 11(9), again relating to fines, which is where the \$1,500 is being increased to \$10,000.

I regret we have not received any amendment in relation to clause 9 [at] this moment in time. Regardless, it seems to me that if you are amending

clause 8, and I will follow the Chairman's lead, would now not be the time to do so?

The Chairman: Honourable Member, you are absolutely correct.

Let me suggest that we do clauses 1 through 7 and give the Minister time to get the correct documents to us.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am very happy with that approach, Mr. Chairman, if the Honourable Minister is happy.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I am a little perplexed, because the amendment that has been drafted by Chambers that has been circulated speaks to clause 10. Mr. Chairman, I do not know if you have it in front of you, clause 10 and clause 11(9).

The Chairman: I do not have it in front of me, but the Honourable Member Mr. Pearman does not have that. He has [clause] 10—

Mr. Scott Pearman: [I have] clauses 8 and 11(9), Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: —clauses 8 and 11. That is the document he has and that is the document he has to go by unless you have another one, unless they sent the wrong document to him.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, if it assists, shall we deal with all the other clauses in Committee now and then come back to clauses 8, 10 and 11 at the end? Would that assist the Honourable Minister?

The Chairman: Okay. We can do that. Minister, are you okay with that?

[No audible reply]

The Chairman: Minister, let's do clauses 1 through 7 first. Let's get that out of the way, please.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Mr. Chairman.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I think, Mr. Chairman, with respect, I believe that there were two amendments that were sent from Chambers. The first one was incorrect. And then I sent the second one to the Clerk myself. But I will take your lead, Mr. Chairman. Do you want to deal with clauses 1 through 7?

The Chairman: Yes. But before we do that, does the Clerk . . . do you have the second—

The Clerk: The first amendment we received was sent by the Minister about an hour or two ago. We were informed about some upcoming amendments which we never did receive. Thanks.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

The Chairman: Okay. So the Clerk does not have it there. So Mr. Pearman does not have it.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Well, Minister, can you help us out here? Because we cannot go any further unless you [send] the documents.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your patience.

Mr. Chairman, right before I started this debate I forwarded to the Clerk and the Speaker the amendments that proposed to amend clauses 10 and 11(9). I am not sure what the Honourable Member is referring to, but I myself sent those amendments to the Clerk as well as the Speaker at 2:56, just before we were getting ready to debate this, Mr. Chairman. I can forward them again, just in case they do not have them.

The Chairman: Please do.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I will do that right now, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your indulgence.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, just let me know if you get the one she is just going to send. Let me know when you get it.

And Clerk, just let me know.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Is it coming directly from the Minister?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes, Honourable Member.

The Clerk: We just received from the Health Ministry the amendments that the Minister is referring to, so we are going to get them up the SharePoint in just a minute.

The Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Pearman, you okay with that? You got it?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, I will follow your lead here and no doubt we can deal with it. I will deal with it in such a manner as you wish to deal with it.

The Chairman: Okay. Let's do [clauses] 1 through 7 first and give the Opposition time to just look at the new . . .

Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Any speakers to clauses 1 through 7?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, sorry, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Chairman: Continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Dealing solely for the moment with clauses with 1 through 7, the first question that we have relates to clause 2. It was something that the Honourable Minister referenced in the closing remarks in the debate. It was about the fact that police officers are now the ones who are going to ticket. And what was not clear from the amendment proposed by clause 2 is whether or not the power to ticket is now going to be limited to police officers in the sense that it is going to be removed from public health officers, or whether public health officers will contain a residual power to ticket. So that is the first question in relation to clause 2.

Mr. Chairman, would you prefer that I put all my questions on clauses 1 through 7, or do them one at time.

The Chairman: Do one at a time.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, that is our first *question*. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you for that question.

The purposes of these amendments are to allow the police officers the ability to ticket; however, at some point there will be a residual power for the public health officers once they have been trained. This allows for the operationalisation of the ticketing regime now because police officers are obviously far more familiar with ticketing because of the way they operate with respect to speeding offences, traffic offences, and the like.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister. A follow-up question on that.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Could I just clarify something? I am sorry. It would just be the police officers. There may at some time be provisions to allow public health officers to do it, but right now it would just be the po-

lice officers as these amendments provide. Thank you for that.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Excellent. You have answered my follow-up question. Thank you, very much, Honourable Minister.

The next question is on page 2 of the Bill, and there are two questions arising in relation to clause 4. And clause 4 is repealing and replacing section 107D of the primary Act, the Public Health Act 1949. There are two questions arising here.

This amendment in clause 4 of the Bill is the bit that deals with the 28-day period, post ticket, as described in the debate earlier and also, the secondary point, of whether or not the issuance of a ticket will create or lead to a criminal offence or involve the criminal proceedings being instituted.

So, the first question I have is about the 28-day period. As I read this my understanding is that . . . and forgive me for just slipping into common sense vernacular, but if I am stopped by a police officer because I am in breach of something. I am given a ticket on the spot, a piece of paper handed over to me. I then have a period of 28 days. And what I am wondering about is the effect of [section] 107D(b), which is still again under clause 4 of the Bill, where it says, "such extended period as may be determined under section 107I."

I have looked at section 107I and, as I understand it, that extends by a further 28 days the time to pay.

If you are with me so far, there is 28 days to pay the ticket. I accept that I am wrong; I pay the ticket. I then can write in up to 48 hours sooner and get another 28 days. And my question then relates to the next clause which is the criminality aspect. If I exercise the right to extend by 28 days, a further 28 days, does that also defer the criminality aspect? So, if I obtain a lawful extension on the ticket, am I postponing by 28 days the criminal impact of the ticket? So that is the first question, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable and Learned Member is correct that if they exercise their right prior to the expiration of the 28 days, within 48 hours, and upon written application to the courts for an extension of another 28 days to pay that ticket, the aspect of criminality is not invoked until after the expiration of that second 28 days.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. And then the second question, still in this same clause 4, and in fact this was the question raised by the Chairman (MP Burgess), in the debate, which was about asking you to clarify how the criminality would work. If I understand it, to assist, the answer is that provided that I accept my guilt (as it were) and pay the ticket either in the first 28 days, or I choose to extend the ticket in writing for a further 28 days, then in either of those cases

there will be no criminal record. I will simply have paid the ticket and paid the fine. Could you then clarify for both for MP Burgess and me when the criminality aspect comes into play?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. Thank you.

The criminality aspect would come into play after the expiration of 56 days, after the 28 plus the 28. So after the two periods of the 28 [days], or alternatively, if the person does not do any actions and goes to court and is convicted (let's say they plead guilty and then they are convicted), then a criminal conviction would be entered.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, again, to try and use common sense language, if I put my hands up and say, *My fault*, and I pay, I will not be deemed a criminal. If I do not do that within the first two periods of 28 days, and then I accept I am wrong, I might be found to be a criminal. And if I challenge it, let's say I was not in breach, and I lose, then I will have criminality attached to my name.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Correct. If you are convicted by a court, that is correct.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, thank you for that.

The next question in clauses 1 through 7 is in clause 6. And that is repealing [section] 107F and actually goes back to the health officer/police officer point. And if you look at [section] 107F of the primary Act, this is about the demand of the person to present their identify . . . excuse me, forgive me, I put it backwards. This is about the need of the person attempting to give a ticket to produce *their* identify. And [section] 107F at the moment relates to the public health officer.

When you explained it, you referred to a police officer. It may be it is the same answer to the question you have already given, but are we effectively taking the public health officer out of the Act itself, out of the primary Act and just having the police officer? And if the answer to that question is yes, is the reason why a police officer does not have to show identity . . . what is the reason for that? If you could answer those two questions. I think I understood the first point, and if I correctly understood the first point, I would just like to know why the police officer does not have the same obligation.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I am just reading through this to answer the Honourable Member's question. Just a moment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

[Pause]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, if I could perhaps get back to the answer. I am just waiting for some technical assistance from the drafter.

The Chairman: That's fine.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: With your leave, I would just like to . . . perhaps we can proceed.

The Chairman: Yes, you can go to . . .

Are there any further speakers on clauses 1 through 7?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I have heard from the drafter. The drafter indicated that the police are not required to show identification.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Right.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: So this particular provision applied to a public health officer who may not have been recognisable in their uniform, whereas police are recognisable. And they are not required to produce any type of identity in current legislation. That is with respect to the police officers.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So to summarise: The reason for the removal of the obligation to show identification is because public health officers will no longer be able to do this function and it will now be limited to police officers.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That is correct.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. That makes perfect sense. Thank you, very much.

The Chairman: Minister, I think it probably wants to be clearer—if it is a police officer without a uniform, because this does not say “uniformed” police officer. You do not want to mislead the public.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Right. So I will pass that back to the Minister, I think.

So could the Honourable Minister kindly confirm. So if it is “uniformed” police officer, then there is no obligation to present identification. But as the Chairman has noted, if it is a police officer not in uniform, there would presumably be such an obligation.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Absolutely. I am certain that is probably part of their custom and practice. So whatever the code of conduct is for police officers, if somebody asks for them to produce identification, then they must do so.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I had a question in respect of clause 7, but you have answered it, which is really we are taking away health officers and others and we

are limiting the power to take it to only those who are police officers. That is what clause 7 is clarifying.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That is correct.

The Chairman: Okay. Any further speakers to [clauses] 1 through 7?

No further speakers. Minister, do you want to move clauses 1 through 7?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 7 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 7 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clauses 1 through 7 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 7 passed.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if I can pause for a moment to see whether or not Members have had an opportunity to review the amendment.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, are you okay to continue?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, I have gotten an amendment via our Whip, from the Government Whip. That amendment, again, refers to clauses 8 and 11(9).

If there is a further document coming to our attention, I have not yet received it. I am happy to deal with the amendment to clause 8 if the Honourable Minister wishes. I understand the amendment and I see what is being done. But it was not clear to me from the Honourable Minister if this is an old document, which is no longer being pursued in respect of clause 8, and if the amendment is now only at clauses 10 and 11(9).

If it is only at clauses 10 and 11(9), we can presumably deal with clauses 8 and 9 as they stand and move on.

The Chairman: Minister, can you help us out there?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, the amendments . . . and I do not know what happened with respect to the circulation so I have to apologise to Honourable Members. The amendments that have been drafted for Chambers are amendments to clause 10 and clause 11(9).

The Chairman: Okay. So we can . . . let's move to clauses 8 and 9.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay.

Clause 8, Mr. Chairman, amends section 107H(2) of the principal Act to provide a penalty of \$3,000 for the offence of refusing to answer questions as required by a police officer.

And clause 9, Mr. Chairman, amends section 107J of the principal Act to remove references to the need to admit to the offence.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Any speakers to clauses 8 and 9?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, we are fine on clauses 8 and 9.

The Chairman: Okay. You want to move clauses 8 and 9 for approval, Minister?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that clauses 8 and 9 stand, form part of the Bill and be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 8 and 8 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 8 and 9 passed.]

The Chairman: Member, you have an amendment. Right?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I will start with [clause] 10.

The Chairman: All right.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, clause 10 amends section 107K of the principal Act to supply the Minister with the authority to prescribe the content of a public health penalty ticket in regulations and to provide clarity with respect to the court's consideration of the guidance issued by the Ministry of Health in determining liability of a person.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 10

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: And then amends section 107K[(1)](f) of the [principal] Act to enable the Minister to specify a penalty for an offence under the Act not exceeding \$10,000 for any offence.

The Chairman: Members, are there any speakers to this amendment?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman. [It is] MP Pearman.

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Pearman, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Although I still do not have the amendments, I think, in an effort to be helpful, my understanding is that the amendment to clause 10 is in identical terms to the amendment to clause 11(9). And if that is the case, I could certainly deal with the amendment on the floor if the Honourable Minister can confirm—

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I can confirm. That is absolutely correct. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Right. Okay. So what is happening here is that the fines for these various offences, of breach of the Public Health Act, are now being increased so that instead of being fines not exceeding \$1,500 they are now fines not exceeding \$10,000. Correct?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I'm sorry, MP Pearman. I missed part of your question. I'm sorry.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's all right. I may be stating the obvious, but I am just trying to clarify as I do not have the amending language.

I think the Honourable Minister confirmed that the amendment to clause 10 is an amendment broadly similar, if not identical, terms to the amendment to clause 9. I was inviting the Honourable Minister to confirm therefore that the amendment to clause 10 was in effect increasing the penalty for the various offences identified in the primary Act at section 107K by increasing the penalties to an amount not exceeding \$1,500 to an amount not exceeding \$10,000.

Have I correctly understood the amendment?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: If I did not know any better, Honourable Member, I would swear that you drafted this amendment. You are absolutely correct.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: God! Don't blame me!

There was a question in the debate Honourable Minister about who made the decision for this increase. Are you able to answer that question?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: This is a policy decision that was made, Honourable Member, by the Government.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And is there any assistance you could give the Honourable House as to why we are seeing such a dramatic increase from \$1,500 to \$10,000?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you. There are a number of penalties, as you could appreciate, that are under the Public Health Act as well as the Quarantine Act. And given the fact that we are still under a public health emergency and we are still trying to do what we can to protect our borders and protect our economy and the health and safety of our residents, we feel that offences that interfere with that should be dealt with accordingly and it sets a \$10,000 fine, or up to a maximum of \$10,000 fine, as a proper disincentive for persons breaching any of the public health orders or the quarantine orders.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Minister, you thanked me for that question. You may not thank me for this one.

Given that we are now going to have fines of \$10,000 for breach, are we going to see the regulations that are coming into effect on Sunday, any time between now and Sunday?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: We are processing those very, very soon. And you would note from the [Standing Orders] that I do have an obligation . . . Government has an obligation to table any negative resolutions at the soonest opportunity. And I will do that. I will undertake to do that and I will do that in accordance with the [Standing Orders].

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.

Are you confident that they are negative resolutions and not affirmative resolutions?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I am confident that they are negative resolutions. That is correct.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.

Those are all my questions, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Honourable Minister, on clause 10.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any objections to the amendment in clause 10?

There appear to be none.

The amendment to clause 10 is approved.

[Motion carried: Clause 10 amended.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to proceed with clause 11, please.

The Chairman: Continue.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 11

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, as the Honourable and Learned Member indicated, the amendment is identical to what we just addressed in clause 10. [Clause 11] amends section 11(1)(f) of the Act to ena-

ble the Minister to specify penalties for offences not exceeding \$10,000. And this is in relation to the equivalent provision in the Quarantine Act, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Any further speakers to that, clause 11?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One quick question. This is an amendment on clause 11 which is amending the Quarantine Act 2017, specifically section 11I, thereof, and as I understand it, Minister, it is putting the fine up to \$10,000. So, again, just to go to common sense laymen's terms, if you breach quarantine, you might have to write a cheque or bring your credit card out or find a bag of cash for \$10,000. Is that correct?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That is correct. That or any other offences that are listed under the Quarantine Act could have a fine for the offence not exceeding \$10,000. You are correct.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

The Chairman: Yes, Honourable Leader and Premier, continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I know that there has been a significant amount of debate, and I think that it is important to note and to recognise that one of the things which we heard inside of the community is that there should be strict and severe penalties for persons who may violate provisions of quarantine.

As you would recognise, of course Mr. Speaker, there are certainly exemptions to supervised quarantine. The question which was just posed by Mr. Pearman . . . and I certainly want to make sure that we are clearing this up, because this allows the Minister of Health to issue regulations to specify penalties for up to \$10,000. That does not mean that all penalties are \$10,000. And those matters have to be issued under negative resolution in order to stipulate the multiple things.

So, not every penalty may be that. We are speaking about penalties for, you know, if you remove a wrist band that you are supposed to be wearing, which is underneath the Quarantine Act, which is given when people arrive to the country. Or whether or not you leave your place where you are supposed to be in quarantine. I think what is important is what you

would have heard the Minister of Transport say in the main debate, and other things of which was said in Government press conferences, is that as our vaccination levels increase there will be continued movement of the policy. But I think the most important thing is that we have multiple citizens that are saying that what we have to do is make sure that there are things which are used as a deterrent for people who would violate quarantine. So I do not want the Honourable Member to state that all items are \$10,000. That is not what it is. This is to allow different penalties to be given up to a maximum of \$10,000, for whatever instances they may be spelled out for.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier Burt.
Any further comments?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just in response to that point, I was very careful to use the language from the Bill which said "not exceeding." So I would respectfully differ from the Premier if it was suggested that I was being anything but forthright, in terms of the language of the Act.

I have a further question on this clause.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Minister indicated that it was subject to the negative resolution procedure. I am just looking at section 172 of the primary Act, the Public Health Act [1949], which seems to suggest that where there are any "such regulations or rules [made for the] provision for the payment of fees or charges the affirmative resolution procedure shall apply."

So, I just draw that to the Honourable Minister's attention.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you. I actually thought you were referring to the Quarantine (COVID-19) (No. 3) Amendment Order [2021]. That is what I thought you were referring to. Which is—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is negative under the Quarantine Act, and it is affirmative in respect of fees and charges under the Public Health Act.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Correct. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. Thank you. You clarified my question.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: You are welcome.

Any further speakers?

Okay. Minister, you want to . . . Any objections to the amendment to clause 11?

There appears to be none.
Clause 11 is approved as amended.

[Motion carried: Clause 11 passed as amended.]

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, thank you.
I would now like to move all clauses, 1 through—

The Chairman: All the clauses have been moved. You can move the preamble.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Preamble?

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I would like to move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved?

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.
Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I now move that the Bill entitled the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be reported to the House as amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill [entitled] Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be reported to the House as amended.

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
The Bill will be reported to the House [as amended].
Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried: The Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with amendments.]

House resumed at 4:40 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.
Members, are there any objections to the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 being reported to the House as amended?

There are none. The matter has been reported with the necessary amendments.

We now move on to the next Order, which is the consideration of the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. [3]) Order 2021 in the name of the Minister of Health. Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that consideration be given to the draft Order entitled Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 3) Order 2021 proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections?
There are none.
Continue, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I am pleased to invite this Honourable House to consider the Order entitled [Public Health \(COVID-19\) Emergency Extension \(No. 3\) Order 2021](#). Mr. Speaker, Members will be aware that the current Public Health Emergency Order is scheduled to lapse on the 24th of June 2021. The Emergency Order in place since the 30th of June 2020 following the state of emergency in place from the 1st of April 2020 was made pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and declares that a public health emergency exists in Bermuda due to a communicable disease that poses a threat to the Island.

Mr. Speaker, we live on a very small island. And as we all know from outbreaks in December and as recently as March and April, COVID-19 can spread quickly and impact our whole community as hundreds of persons test positive and thousands of persons end up in quarantine.

Mr. Speaker, we can slow the spread of the virus by following basic public health advice of wearing a mask to cover our nose and mouth as well as physically distancing, downloading the WeHealth Bermuda app and avoiding the three Cs of closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings. The more barriers and space there is between you and others the harder it is for the virus to spread. And also, Mr. Speaker, we in our community are fortunate in that we have added another layer of protection, namely the COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, as has been said many times, vaccines save lives. And it is no different with the Pfizer-BioNTech and the AstraZeneca vaccines being used in Bermuda right now. Both vaccines have proven to be highly effective after two doses. If immunised

and you do get COVID-19, you are likely to experience more mild symptoms and become less ill as your body is better able to fight off the virus. This means we can keep people out of the hospital and have fewer deaths due to COVID-19.

With the reduced viral load in your system, it is also hoped that you are less likely to transmit the coronavirus as well. While researchers continue to delve into the impacts of vaccines on transmission, the initial studies are very promising.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is firmly of the view that the COVID-19 vaccine is the key to our return to normal. Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's goal of community immunity will be achieved when 70 per cent of the population has been immunised. To date, 64 per cent of the population has been vaccinated with one dose, and 55.4 per cent of the population has been immunised with two doses. But when you take that into consideration, just the eligible Bermuda population, and those mainly, Mr. Speaker, from the age of 12 and above, 72.2 per cent of that population has been vaccinated, and 62.5 per cent of that population has been fully immunised. And these are great results so far, Mr. Speaker, and I have to extend, again, a thank you to all the people who have taken the step to get their vaccination to protect themselves, their families, and our community.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government we recognise it will take more time to reach that goal of community immunity. Therefore, a more immediate goal is the immunisation of 90 per cent of persons over 65 years of [age], which is our most vulnerable group. And I am very pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that while 6 per cent of residents over 65 years old are vaccinated now with one dose, an impressive 76 per cent are fully immunised with two doses, which means that we are well on our way to achieving our goal of at least 82 per cent being immunised. And, again, that is of the age group of over 65-year-olds which are our most vulnerable.

To repeat, Mr. Speaker, preventing infection, the onset of the disease itself, and community spread via a programme of mass vaccination will be a critical part of how we navigate our way out of this pandemic. We have all felt the impact that COVID-19 has had on us personally, and we all know how it has impacted our Island's economy. Getting vaccinated is an integral part of our ongoing collective effort to reduce the spread of the virus here on the Island. This is essential, not only for our health, but also to allow us to return to a sense of normality within our lives. And if you have not had the vaccination, we please invite you to speak to your doctor or a trusted medical professional to help you to make an informed decision.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, as we all know, COVID-19 was caused by a new virus that spread quickly throughout the world. Unfortunately, it still exists in large part because it can be transmitted so easily between people who are in close contact or

through coughs and sneezes. While most infected people suffer mild flu-like symptoms, some become seriously ill and some even die.

Mr. Speaker, in my role as the Minister of Health I consulted with the Chief Medical Officer and determined that a communicable disease of the first or second category, namely COVID-19, continues to pose a severe threat to public health in Bermuda. The recent outbreak which saw both a sharp rise in positive cases and an increase in deaths highlighted the impact of variants of concern. In this case the UK variant of COVID-19, the B.1.1.7. To control and contain the spread of infection, public health measures such as those provided for in regulations will continue to be relevant and necessary beyond the 24th of June 2021. This Order before us now, Mr. Speaker, will extend the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Order 2021 made under the Public Health Act 1949 to permit the Governor to continue the Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) Regulations 2021 which imposed extraordinary measures necessary in the interest of public health to prevent, control and suppress COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 2) Order 2021 was made under the positive resolution procedure effective the 25th of April 2021 for 60 days, due to expire on the 24th of June 2021. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage globally and the public health emergency continues to exist on our shores. Therefore, in accordance with section 107A(3) of the Public Health Act 1949, I bring the Emergency Extension (No. 3) Order [2021] to this Honourable Chamber to prolong the state of public health emergency for a further 60 days ending on the 23rd of August 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable and Learned Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is not here to be critical for the sake of criticism. What I have always tried to do when I have spoken in this Honourable House is to point out things I believe the Government is doing well and to point out sometimes things that I believe the Government could do better.

Let me start with this: The news from the Honourable Minister of Health that there are those 64 per cent of our Island who have had at least one dose of the vaccine is heartening news. The goal is to

get to herd immunity. And as a matter of logic, those people who have had at least one dose are likely to have a second. And 64 per cent may not be the number that Government was hoping to be at for May (was their target) but nonetheless, again, credit where credit is due. It is a good number for those trying to get to herd immunity which we should all be trying to do whether or not we wish to have the vaccine, because if the Island can achieve herd immunity, everyone will be safer whether they are immunised or not immunised.

Likewise, let me also commend the Minister for the point about the over-65s, the most vulnerable. The statistics and numbers that she just presented to this Honourable House are indeed heartening and very good news indeed. I also think it is commendable that this jurisdiction, this country, this Island has taken as important the respect for personal choice. And the fact that whether or not someone chooses to be immunised is a matter between that person and their doctor, or indeed a matter between that person and their family, or indeed a right of a particular person as an individual if he or she so chooses. And so those are the positives here.

But what is this Order actually doing? This Order is extending emergency powers for another two months. Mr. Speaker, many, many months ago when we stood up to consider emergency powers being wielded under the Constitution, before they were moved to the Public Health Act, there were some concerns expressed as to the length of time for which emergency powers are extended. Because as a matter of liberty and fundamental principle, emergency powers should always be no broader than is absolutely necessary.

Why do I say that? Because it is an infringement on personal liberty. It is the State telling the citizen what he or she is allowed to do. And sometimes, Mr. Speaker, that is necessary and that is the language of this particular Act—necessary—but it should be no wider than is absolutely necessary. So, in respect of this extension of time which seeks a further two months for emergency powers, our position (and it is offered respectfully) is that you have to look at the community that we serve.

For 18 months—I may have the number of months wrong now but it has been a long time—Bermudians have laboured collectively under significant fundamental and draconian restrictions. And all of us—all of us—are feeling beaten down and frustrated and fed up. Those of us who follow the rules follow the rules because we know we are trying to help our fellow man and woman on this Island. But when we look and we see a position today where there are very few COVID-19 cases, where we are, as I said earlier today, on the downslope, hopefully—we all hope—and perhaps we are walking down the valley below as well, I don't know. And in those circum-

stances, Mr. Speaker, we wonder whether two months is too long.

Now, we are supporting the extension. We would support a month. But I think this Government needs to take the pulse of the community. And the pulse of the community in my view, respectfully, is that they should be no broader and wider than need to be. So Parliament is sitting. We could come back here any Friday. We can pass a new extension Order very easily. And ultimately we are here to serve the people. And there is a palpable sense that the people are not being listened to on this issue.

So, it is our respectful suggestion that, yes, there should be an extension but that one month is perfectly adequate and it can be extended on a month-to-month basis thereafter based on the COVID-19 numbers, based upon the facts, based upon the science, based upon the medicine, but also based upon the toleration level of our community, because it is not just COVID-19 that is an issue for us. It is also mental health and economic decline.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing, I think we have to look at the impact of these restrictions because when we are looking at these restrictions we are dealing with aspects of Constitution. And, you know, it is fine to point to a piece of paper and say how important it is, but why is it important? It is important because it regulates the rights of individuals, the human rights of individuals and the State, the Government.

And I am concerned that some of the suggestions are of questionable constitutionality. We are concerned that to restrict Bermudians from returning home is wrong. And we are concerned that a mandatory quarantine of non-immunised persons at their cost is highly likely to be unconstitutional.

So, against those considerations, and there were others in the debate earlier from both sides who raised these concerns, we do invite the Government to have a re-think about this. It all seems to be a bit of a scramble. We have not seen the regulations for Sunday. And we hope the Government will listen, will learn and react in a sensible and positive way.

In respect of this particular Order, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly agree it be extended. We would suggest it be extended for a month and then we look at the facts as they are on the ground in a months' time. We are in session. Parliament is in session. It can very easily be extended if that is what the people wish and that is what the medical situation calls for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

Any other Member?

None. Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will happily speak.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you, very much. I had the understanding that one of my other Members was going to speak, but so be it.

Mr. Speaker, just very briefly about the extension of the public health emergency. I think that it is very important that we understand the construct of what it is that we are actually doing.

There is no question that there is a public health emergency because there is a global pandemic which is still raging. And we all know this despite the wonderful statistics and how well we have done. We know that there is still a public health emergency that is required inside of this country and one that is global, based upon the fact that last January the World Health Organization issued a notice of a public health emergency of international concern. That public health emergency of international concern has not ended. We know further, Mr. Speaker, that also after that declaration, clearly, they declared a pandemic. And we have been dealing with the coronavirus pandemic since that time.

It is important that we understand that the extension of the public health emergency allows the Minister of Health the ability to make sure that rules and regulations are in place to control any possible spread of the coronavirus. Yes, these are the tools that are given to institute items such as curfews. Yes, these are the tools that are given to implement items such as the restrictions on freedom of movement. And yes, I would firmly agree with all of this thing that there are items which have to be taken lightly. That is the reason why when we passed this amendment last year, we ensured that it had to come back to the House of Assembly so that it could be democratically voted on as to whether or not these matters should continue. And we will continue to come back to the House of Assembly in that manner.

But I think it is important that we separate what a public health emergency is and the regulations which fall under the public health emergency, because they are two different things. Now, what the Government stated, as we laid out in April, our strategy for moving the country beyond the pandemic was a combination of strict controls internally to eliminate local transmission combined with an increase of vaccinations in the country combined with stronger and stricter protections at the border. Those are the three aspects, Mr. Speaker, that form part of the strategy to move Bermuda beyond the pandemic.

When I gave the national address on behalf of the Government towards the end of April, I said that we would like for the public health emergency to be able to expire on the 24th of June when it was set to expire, Mr. Speaker. And we all know and we all understand that. But the conditions were that we had reached community protection, or that we had eliminated local transmission. We have been relatively

good on the local transmission side, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is that we have not yet reached community protection.

What is important also to notice, Mr. Speaker, is that as of June 20th, by and large, most restrictions in the country are going to be lifted due to the excellent work of all of us, as citizenry. And so the items such as mask restrictions in restaurants [and] things in which people do not want to do [such as] wear masks outdoors in the sweltering heat, all of those matters are being relaxed. So I do not want anyone who is listening to think that a two-month extension to the public health emergency means a two-month extension to restrictions, or curfew, or others types of matters. It is a recognition that in this country there is a public health emergency and the Government of the day must have the tools in which to deal with a public health emergency.

And I think it is keenly critical that we understand that, Mr. Speaker, because what we do not want to do is that we do not want to get to a place where the Minister is just declaring public health emergencies repeatedly, repeatedly and repeatedly. That is why we are bringing it this way. And that is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, we are extending it for two months, because we extended it for the longest possible period. If we run out of [a] place where we no longer need a public health emergency, no longer need restrictions, it is able to be ended. But it is very likely, Mr. Speaker, that before we rise we might have to bring another extension to make sure it lasts for the time that the House of Assembly is out on vacation.

So these are the things, Mr. Speaker, which are important and I want everyone to understand what the framework is. The public health emergency and its extension allow the Government, allows the Minister of Health to issue regulations that will control the spread of an infectious disease, in this case the coronavirus. There is no doubt that we are in a public health emergency. There is no doubt that there is the danger of variants. And there is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we are still not out of the woods. When I spoke to the country on Tuesday night, Mr. Speaker, I said that the ending of most public health restrictions does not mean that the pandemic is behind us. And I think it is important for all of us to know and to remember [this].

Mr. Speaker, I am human like all of us and I have feelings like all of us. And I have friends like all of us. And we recognise and we understand how contentious issues have become over Government policies. But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker, leadership is extraordinarily difficult. You know that, Mr. Speaker, having been a leader. Members know that being leaders themselves. And oftentimes you would have to make the best of two bad decisions. What I have learned in this time is that you cannot underestimate this virus. Whether it is the mutations we saw which

devastated our country when they came into place in March and we saw the massive spike in cases.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Bermuda led the world in coronavirus statistics—the wrong way. Not the best way, Mr. Speaker, the wrong way. We had the highest infection rates, the highest of renewed cases on a per capita basis, hospitalisation—all of those things, Mr. Speaker. Our hospital, Mr. Speaker, was almost overflowing three days due to a highly infectious variant. And now, Mr. Speaker, the Delta variant is 60 times more infectious than the one that ran through our country.

So as citizens we all have a responsibility. And we as leaders have to ask ourselves whether or not we wish to move beyond the pandemic. And so with the extension of the public health emergency today, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognise that we still do have a public health emergency. And until the public health emergency ends around the world, it is likely that we will still have restrictions here.

However, Mr. Speaker, if we are able to get ourselves to community protection, if we are able to creep above . . . because the more contagious the variants are, the higher the level [of controls] of which we need. If we are able to creep above 70 per cent of the population or even move higher, then there can be a time when we can end the public health emergency here in the country, and at the same time make sure that we have strict controls in our Orders to prevent the importation of mutant variants.

We have done a good job, Mr. Speaker, and none of it has been easy. No one likes making difficult decisions, but that is what our job is. And so I support the extension of the public health emergency today, Mr. Speaker. I think it is just and valid. We know that we are in a public health emergency. But I am excited to know that with this extension of the public health emergency for the first time since we entered a state of emergency in April (which was under the Constitution of the Public Health Act), to now, it is the first time that the Government will be able to relax social distancing restrictions, to relax a lot of the controls which we have to allow large groups . . . for the limit to be set at 100 to make sure that restaurants can reopen to full capacity and other types of things, Mr. Speaker, because we have made progress.

So while we are still extending the emergency, it is important to note that the country is in the best spot that it has been since we entered this pandemic in April [2020]. And that is due to the hard work of the Minister of Health, the hard work of all the teams at Health and the hard work of all of the dedicated public officers who are doing all of the work, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that this strategy is executed.

We are tired, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt. We speak to public health officers, see public servants all the time who say that they want to get back to dealing with policy. And so though we are extending this

public health emergency, Mr. Speaker, it is great to know that we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. And the restrictions which will come into place on Saturday, as was mentioned by the Minister of Health in the press conference on Tuesday, will be the least restrictions this country has had since we began the pandemic.

There is a little more to go. And in addition to the public officers, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of this country who by and large have stood by us and have understood the difficult decisions that have to be made in order for us to return to a sense of normality. Pandemics are stressful. They damage public health and they damage mental health. And the only way we can repair that is by moving beyond them. And that is what this Government has set out to do, Mr. Speaker. So I support this extension and I thank the Minister of Health for her dedicated work over the past 16 months.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

No other Member, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not intend to prolong the debate. I think that the Honourable Premier summed up the position very, very eloquently.

It is unfortunate that we are at this place still, but the reality of the situation is . . . and one only needs to look at Bermuda as well as internationally what the statistics are concerning COVID-19. We still are in the middle of a pandemic. One that none of us have ever lived through. None of us probably would have expected to have seen this. And the reality is that we still have to be able to have the tools to issue regulations to help to control the spread of COVID-19.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that the draft Order be approved and a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Thank you. The message will be sent and the appropriate message contained in it.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 3) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Speaker: Thank you. We now move on to the next item on the Order [Paper] which is [Order] No. 6. The Consideration of the Exchange of Land Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister.

[Pause]

The Speaker: We see you Minister but we do not hear you.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

AGREEMENT

EXCHANGE OF LAND AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CORPORATION OF HAMILTON AND HAMILTON WAREHOUSE COMPANY LIMITED

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I move that consideration be given to the Exchange of Land Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited, reference those areas of lands situated in the city of Hamilton and the Islands of Bermuda as described in the First Schedule hereto comprising 23.6 square feet and 107.4 square feet, respectively, hatched in yellow on the plan annexed hereto and marked Plan B with the applicants hereto, if any, and subject to matters described therein and in accordance with the provisions of section 20(1B) of the [Municipalities Act 1923](#).

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Minister proceeding?

There are none.
Proceed, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to introduce the draft Exchange [of Land] Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton, a corporation existing pursuant to terms of the Municipalities Act 1923, and Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited.

Mr. Speaker, the two parties wish to enter into the agreement set out in the draft Exchange [of Land] Agreement. In July 2020, this Honourable House approved the original exchange of land which occurred between the Corporation of Hamilton and the McCalmon Trust. However, after further review it was determined that there was another party, the Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited, that should have been included to complete this exchange. The Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited is the trust that owns one of the parcels of land that the Butterfield & Vallis Company supplied while the Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited owns the land to the east of the Warehouse.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that the rationale for the exchange was for the Corporation to complete a sidewalk running from Woodlands Road to

the boundary of the City of Hamilton at Canal Road, a route frequently used by schoolchildren. In order to complete the sidewalk the following exchanges are required:

1. Corporation of Hamilton to McCalmon Trust Limited, 64.6 square feet approved by the House in July 2020.
2. McCalmon Trust Limited to the Corporation of Hamilton, 196.3 square feet approved by the House in July 2020.
3. Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited to Corporation of Hamilton, 2.7 square feet. (This is the proposed exchange.)
4. Corporation of Hamilton to Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited, 131 square feet proposed exchange by this procedure.

Mr. Speaker, once the transactions are completed with both the trustees of the McCalmon Trust and the Hamilton Warehouse [Company] Limited the Corporation of Hamilton will receive a total of 199 square feet of land in exchange for conceding 195.6 square feet of land.

Mr. Speaker, section 20(1A) of the Municipalities Act 1923 requires that any agreement for “(a) the sale of land which is the property of the Corporation; or (b) a lease, conveyance or other disposition of any interest in land which is the property of the Corporation, being a lease, disposition or conveyance expressed to be for a term exceeding twenty-one years or for terms renewable exceeding in the aggregate twenty-one years, and any related agreement, must be submitted in draft to the Minister for approval by the Cabinet, and by the Legislature.”

Mr. Speaker, the draft Exchange [of Land] Agreement is such an agreement. It has been submitted to the Minister and has been approved by the Cabinet. It is now before this Honourable House for its approval in accordance with section 20(1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923, which provides that the approval of the Legislature shall be expressed by way of resolution, passed by both Houses of the Legislature, approving the agreement and communicated to the Governor by message.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my presentation of the draft Exchange [of Land] Agreement and I submit it for consideration. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: MP Cannonier, you have the floor.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Minister for this consideration.

I was questioning whether we had done this already in looking at the Schedules, but of course, the Honourable Minister has cleared up the question that I did have.

[We] recognise that it requires approval by Parliament. And we are in full agreement with this so we do not have really much to say. We have visited this before. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

[There are] none.
Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I now move that this Honourable House in accordance with sections 20(1A) and (1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923, approve the Exchange [of Land] Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and the Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited as set out in the attached draft of the agreement and that the appropriate message be sent to the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are no objections.

The appropriate letter will be sent to the Governor.

[Motion carried: The Exchange of Land Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Hamilton Warehouse Company Limited was approved.]

The Speaker: We now move on to [Order] No. 7, the final item of the day—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I beg your pardon.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Clerk: There is no relevant message for the Governor on these two pieces right here.

The Speaker: Okay. No problem. Noted.

—consideration of the Sale and Purchase Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Arnold's Discount Limited.

Minister.

AGREEMENT

SALE AND PURCHASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CORPORATION OF HAMILTON AND ARNOLD'S DISCOUNT LIMITED

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I move that consideration be given to the Sale and Purchase Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Arnold's Discount Limited, reference areas of all that triangular parcel of land measuring 358 square feet situated in the Islands of Bermuda together with the appurtenances thereto and the dwellings directed thereon or on part thereof and known as land adjacent to 20 North Street, City of Hamilton, HM 12, and as described in the Schedule annexed and hatched in red of the plan, also annexed hereto, and in accordance with the provisions of section 20(1B) of the Municipalities Act [1923].

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the draft Sales Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton, the Corporation existing pursuant to terms of the Municipalities Act 1923, the vendor, and to Arnold's Discount Limited, the purchaser, a local company incorporated in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the vendor and the purchaser wish to enter into the agreement set out in the draft Sales Agreement. Section 20(1A) of the Municipalities Act 1923 requires that any agreement for "(a) the sale of land which is the property of the Corporation; or (b) a lease, conveyance or other disposition of any interest in land which is the property of the Corporation, being a lease, disposition or conveyance expressed to be for a term exceeding twenty-one years or for terms renewable exceeding in the aggregate twenty-one years, and any related agreement, must be submitted in draft to the Minister for approval by the Cabinet and the Legislature." Mr. Speaker, the draft Sales Agreement is such an agreement.

It has been submitted to the Minister and has been approved by the Cabinet. It is now before this Honourable House for its approval in accordance with section 20(1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923 which provides that the approval of the Legislature shall be expressed by way of resolution, passed by both Houses of the Legislature, approving the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my presentation of the draft Sales Agreement.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, just for clarification, in fact the message does have to be sent to the Governor for the previous one and this one. Okay?

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: MP Cannonier, you have the floor.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous Exchange, this actually is a sale of land and so we would like to congratulate the Corporation on this opportunity that they have taken. I am very familiar with the lot of land that is spoken of

and it does only make sense that Arnold's would want to purchase such a property.

Hopefully that means that they can continue on in business and to ensure that they offer some of the great prices they do as a warehouse shopping supermart-type. So we are in complete agreement with this here and glad to see it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There are none other. Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I now move that this Honourable House in accordance with sections 20(1A) and (1B) of the Municipalities Act 1923, approve the Sales Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Arnold's Discount Limited as set out in the attached draft of the agreement and that the appropriate message be sent to the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are no objections.

The appropriate message will be sent to the Governor.

[Motion carried: The Sale and Purchase Agreement between the Corporation of Hamilton and Arnold's Discount Limited was approved.]

The Speaker: Members, that brings us to the close of the Orders for today. And we will now go to our third readings. I will first call on the Minister of Finance.

Minister of Finance, would you like to do your third reading for [Order] No. 1?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none, proceed Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME (OCCUPATIONAL PENSIONS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: 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 its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: National Pension Scheme (Occupational Pensions) Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister, would you like to do your second one?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read by its title only?

None. Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

ECONOMIC SUBSTANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, 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 its title only and has now passed.

Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried: Economic Substance Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. I—

The Speaker: I am going to make a comment.

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker: Premier, before you start I am going to make a comment. We have had confusion today in reference to amendments around this. And a lot of the implication was that the fault was on this side. I did not appreciate that. I would expect the Minister to have been here to do her third reading because, had the proper procedure been followed when the amendments were to have been forwarded, we would not have had the confusion we had earlier. And on top of that confusion now we have this.

That has got to be cleaned up, Premier. When you speak with your Ministers, I would appreciate it if you get this in order.

Go ahead, Premier.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Premier, go ahead and continue.

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

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the explanation [for] the House for . . . which Standing Order I am actually suspending. I would like to move that . . .

The Clerk: Twenty-one.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. E. David Burt: I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable to me to read the third reading of the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be read for its third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: Public Health Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Premier, being that you are in front of the microphone, will you do the next item?

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, July 2nd.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Does any Member wish to speak to that?

Hon. E. David Burt: I will certainly be speaking but I know that one of my Members—

The Speaker: No, you can speak now. You can speak now; I have no objection to you speaking now, Mr. Premier. You were ready. You have the microphone, you can continue.

[Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Is that MP Wade?

Mr. Jason Wade: It is, Mr. Speaker. How are you this evening?

The Speaker: I am getting better.

Mr. Jason Wade: I saw that you were rushing us off, Mr. Speaker. I do apologise as my mute button took a while to unclick, as they say.

The Speaker: Well, if the mute button does not move quick enough the gavel sure can.

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR OUR SPORTS CLUBS

Mr. Jason Wade: I have heard, I have heard!

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the Government's initiative that we followed through on yesterday in ensuring that we provided capital development funds for our sports clubs. Mr. Speaker, as you know I was the president of the Southampton Rangers Sports Club for four years and the initiative is heart-warming to me because I know first-hand how much these sports clubs need these funds.

Mr. Speaker, these funds are going to be used for things such as lighting, things such as improving the changing rooms for our youth teams, for our senior teams, for improving the equipment around the fields around the whole Island. So it will not just Southampton Rangers (but that is my club, as you know, Mr. Speaker) but for all of the clubs around the Island that received the funds yesterday I know that they will go to good use.

Mr. Speaker, I correct that to say that, as the president of Southampton Rangers, it was hard to be the leader of Southampton Rangers. Tough decisions had to be made as the president of Southampton Rangers. And I say that to say that we now find ourselves in a very tough position as a country.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mr. Jason Wade: We were voted in to make these tough decisions. We knew that these tough decisions would have to be made. This Government does not take lightly that the restrictions that go into place on the 20th are going to be tough for many for our voters. Many of them! But we were voted in to make these tough decisions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone back and forth as a caucus on these restrictions, back and forth. And what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that the dialogue has been robust. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day this country cannot afford to have what happened in March and April of this year and November of last year happen again. We cannot afford it, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts.

Those are the facts that we are presented with today and this is the advice that we have taken from the experts. We have not taken this advice from the conspiracy theorists. We have not taken this advice from those know-it-alls who create the news. No. We have taken this advice from the professionals, the professionals who have studied these pandemic diseases that we have today.

So, what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is our leadership is strong. I have butted heads personally with our leadership, but what I will say is that this is the advice that we have been given. It is not forever. I think the Minister of Health stated it earlier, and the Premier stated it earlier. These restrictions will not be forever.

What we are trying to do is to get to a point where we do not have to have these restrictions anymore. And yes, they are inconvenient. I receive numerous calls from my constituents saying how inconvenient these restrictions are. But, Mr. Speaker, what I will say to them is this: We hear you. We understand what you are going through. What we are trying to avoid is what happened in April and March of this year where the Government had to shell out millions of dollars to support those who were out of work. We cannot afford to do that again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I end with this: I say to the Bermuda listening public, we hear you. We hear your frustrations. We hear your support as well. But we hear the frustrations. Hold on a little while longer and we promise you, things will get back to normal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

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

The Speaker: MP Cannonier, you have your 30 minutes.

'REVOLVE AROUND THE WORLD' LARGE GATHERING BREACHES

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

I wanted to start off where we just heard from our Minister that we have to continue to still wear our masks and socially distance ourselves. And with all the controversy that seems to be taking place here lately, I think it is important again that I reiterate what I have said in the past. And that is that we need to be very clear to the public on exactly what it is that we are expecting of them and we, as leaders ourselves in return, need to be living by these guidelines that have been set out—that we continue to socially distance and that we continue to wear masks, especially if we are not in the setting of our immediate families.

What begins to get disturbing for me is when, not too long ago, when we—

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

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

I just want to make sure the Honourable Member is aware, because he said the public health regulations and guidelines. The public health regulations and guidelines in May were revised and can be found on the Government website in regard to masking and social distancing. Masking and social distancing do not apply to persons who have been vaccinated and people who have been vaccinated can meet indoors and outdoors without masks. And that I think is important that the Honourable Member knows because what he just stated was not the correct public health guidelines which exist. It is not restricted just to your family members. That changed in May.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Continue.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I would like to clarify. I did say, Mr. Speaker, especially if you are not within your family circle, to qualify exactly what I was saying. So for those of us who want to continue to practice the guidelines that have been set out, I simply was reiterating that especially amongst your family members, if you still want to wear masks then you can.

I will accept what the Premier was trying to interject there, but what begins to get confusing is that on May 28th, the Premier, when he was calling for folks to come up to the Stadium, then said, you know, *Those of you take heed.* (These are his words.) *You still need to social distance and wear a mask.* But yet we continue to see things like Revolve who are now being investigated because we can see that social distancing was not taking place and that masks were not being worn. Only (and hopefully the Premier can clear this up) for us to then see a video this week of the Premier floating on a lilo and there was a party going on, on a boat, that he was attending. And whether or not these folks are SafeKey'ed or not, social distancing was not taking place as he asked for on May 28th (for those who are SafeKey'ed), and masks were not being worn.

This was after the Government had called for an investigation into Revolve for the exact same matter. And so this is what is causing confusion amongst the people in Bermuda so that when they see our Leader saying one thing and then doing another, per se, in their perception they are confused and they begin to get angry.

You cannot have videos being circulated like this here that show a complete disregard, as you listen to the public, a complete disregard of the very things that the leaders are saying that you must uphold. And this is where the confusion, and this is where the anger is coming in.

So when the Minister today said that we need to continue, as I said, to wear our masks and we need to continue to safeguard, if these videos continue to come out then the public has every right to be inflamed. The public has every right to be upset when we tell them *even if you have SafeKey that you have to wear a mask and social distance*, but yet we see our leaders doing the complete opposite.

This is a concerning matter and if it is not cleared up, I can assure this Government it is going to get worse because people are angry now. And I am sure the Government feels it. The debates that we had today clearly show that people are upset. And so we have got to as leaders act out and live what we are preaching.

I mean, we had not too far in the past where Ministers were removed from positions because of not following guidelines. But that does not seem to be continuing to happen. We continue to see videos that show a flagrant disregard for the very things that we have already put in place. And if the Premier does not get a hold of this, it is going to be continually challeng-

ing for him to get people to agree to the guidelines that he is putting forward because it appears as if we are being two-faced. That is what it appears like. So we have got to do away with this kind of thing and it is important that our leaders ensure that they practice what they are preaching.

So, as I have said in the past, if you want to clear it up then put the full matter out there. I mean, the Premier just today is talking about, you know, *We are moving in a great position here. We are going to be removing restrictions like we have not had before.* But yet the Premier not too long ago, just the other day, was saying in the paper that this winter is going to be one of the worst winters we have had concerning COVID-19. Those are two completely different statements being made.

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: I know the Honourable Member swears by what is written in the *Royal Gazette*, but I am not entirely certain that the Honourable Member attended the Bermuda Captive Conference. In my comments I spoke specifically that the pandemic in this world is not over, even though it seems as though there is a lull currently. And if we do not have strong protections at our borders, we could see this situation get worse again. That was what was relayed to the Bermuda Captive Conference. So I know that the Honourable Member is trying to make a point, but he cannot make a point if he is using incorrect facts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP, just be guided by the comment. But continue.

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

That is why it is important, as I have already said, that the Premier needs to qualify his statements and ensure that he qualifies them over and over so that the people understand it.

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. He is saying that I am required to qualify my statements. He was taking the information from the *Royal Gazette* and using it. If he would have

followed and watched the actual things, I spoke clearly to what took place.

The Speaker: Okay.
Be guided, MP.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I am guided by what the Premier has said and I am taking to heart exactly what he is saying. But if the print media is putting out something that is false then it is incumbent upon the Premier to ensure that he corrects it, because people are following the media and people are also following the Premier and the leaders in Cabinet and the likes.

So, if misinformation is out there, so that it does not propagate and get all throughout the Island that, *Oh-oh! The Premier said this here that in December it is going to get worse*, without qualifying it, that is what people are saying. Just like when the Premier does not give a complete qualification to other matters, then people will go off and make assumptions. And all I am saying is that the Premier needs to qualify these things to ensure that the people are clear.

That is why the anger is out there right now. Because more qualification needs to be given to a very emotive issue in this Island. And so they are assuming that the Premier is saying at a conference that it is going to be worse in December if we do not follow guidelines and the likes, then if they are misinterpreting that, it is important that they do not have the wrong interpretation of what the Premier was attempting to say.

So I accept his qualification, but I do believe not enough people are listening right now to have heard that. He needs to get out and to qualify it and to ensure that the general populace is aware. And if the media is misquoting him, he needs to call out the media. He has had no qualms about calling out the media in the past about what has been said or what they thought he had said in the past. He needs to qualify it. He has made no bones about doing that. And this is just another case where he should be on top of it, ensuring that the media gets it correct. That is all I am saying.

So I appreciate that the Premier will qualify these things that I have brought up, especially the media that I have just seen where people are on a boat that he is attending and there is not any social distancing taking place. There are no masks being worn. But yet a week or two just before, this Government is calling for an investigation into Revolve for the exact same thing. The Premier needs to qualify this here and clear it up.

So I will move on to the second Member that I wanted to discuss this evening. And it is more of a question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

BERMUDA NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

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

I have been hearing that at some point in time, I do not know exactly when, that Government has awarded the contract (I will quote), for the National Sports Stadium to the Damon Wade, the former Chairman of the PLP party. So I am hoping that the Premier can, or whoever the Minister is in charge, clarify this matter as to whether or not the contract has finally been awarded to the former Chairman of the PLP party, Damon Wade. That is question number one. And if this has been awarded to him, when can we expect a public statement to come out?

I think the second question that I have concerning this matter is that a lot was said back several years ago concerning the matter. In fact, a couple of years ago I even put questions forward as to whether or not the former chairman of the PLP party had been awarded the contract, because in his estimation when he spoke to me, he said that he had confirmation with him in writing that he had received the contract. But yet when I asked the questions formally, the then Honourable Member Foggo said that no, no contract had been awarded. I left it as it was.

A lot has been said since then and I believe, Mr. Speaker, there were public statements being made by the PLP, and I can quote them. There was one quote, Mr. Speaker, that was done on December the 23rd, on *Bernews*, that said "Regrettably, the high moral standard that the Officers and Members have set for the Party" (meaning the PLP party) "and themselves was recently failed, and the Party has to act to protect and further enshrine its values. To that end, the PLP wishes to advise the public that the Executive Committee of the Party held an emergency meeting last week" (back then on December 23rd) "where a motion of no confidence was passed unanimously against Chairman Damon Wade. . . . The PLP has a zero tolerance policy regarding the exploitation of Party Office for personal gain and no public official acted inappropriately."

I am curious. And my question is, if in fact this contract has now been awarded to the former chairman, what has changed as far as the policy is concerned? They were very strong about the fact that they have a zero tolerance for someone who they deemed to be acting inappropriately. So what has changed over the years for them now to award the contract to the individual that we are talking about for the National Stadium?

The next question is, okay, we know that back then the former chairman of the PLP party actually had financing in place for this particular project. My question is, Is that financing still in place? Because when I last talked to him he was losing money because the Government had not moved on the contract. So I am curious as to years later, does he still

have that financing in place? Or is Government now financing this, albeit, the taxpayer financing this particular project? It is important for the public to know this and to understand more clearly how the Government has made an about-face concerning this matter.

And so as we continue to try and qualify some of these things, I have not heard any public statement to the fact that the former chairman of the party has been awarded this particular contract. It would be good to now hear from our public officials, our leaders, as to whether or not this has taken place.

I am sure that I will have some more questions that will follow from this here, but I am encouraging this Government to now let us know why they have made an about-face on making some strong statements that they will not entertain anyone who is going to put the party in any jeopardy and that was seeking out for personal gain, as they stated, and made a quote to say that they would not tolerate anyone exploiting their public office, or the party office, I should say, for personal gain. I have had talks in the past concerning this matter with those involved and it was clear to me that the expectation was that he would get the contract.

Now, the next and last question I have, because so many years have passed, two years since the last statement was made, quite frankly a little more than that, from the actual Government and from the former PLP chairman, after so many years there is a policy in place that you would put this thing back out to tender because variables change. Within months, variables change. I am curious. If he has been awarded this contract, can the Premier, or whoever the Minister is in charge, qualify why they did not put this particular tender back out to the public to bid on and simply just went ahead and awarded it to the very person who they shunned a couple of years ago?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have your 20 minutes.

NATIONAL HEROES DAY 2020/21

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as you all know, we go into our National Heroes [Day] weekend. And I note that we have not designated any new heroes for this year, or last year. I think given the past 12 months, Mr. Speaker, there are many heroes that ought to be recognised this year—in particular, our frontline workers who have worked diligently, continuously under stren-

uous circumstances to address the COVID-19 crises that we face in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to identify the retail hospitality workers who were challenged like they have never been challenged before. And still, some of them rose to the surface and helped keep our economy floating even though they are doing so by the skin of their teeth.

I would like to identify the farmers and fisherman. The farmers continued to produce fresh products for the residents of Bermuda and the fisherman who had to be creative in delivering fish in our community. Actually, many of them were doing home deliveries. Again, [I take note of our] food security during these difficult times and the compromises and the challenges that these two professionals had to address.

Mr. Speaker, other heroes that we should recognise are the [Royal] Bermuda Regiment and the [Bermuda] Police [Service] who made sure that our COVID-19 laws have been addressed and that the laws were abided by and they did so with aplomb, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the parents . . . our parents of students who not only had to teach their own children at home, but at the same time manage a household and continue with their professional careers be it at home or in person doing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I would also recognise our teachers. Again, they had to teach from home in a new circumstance with online training. And they also had to deal with their families and young children while also delivering world-class tutelage to our students here in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, and we applaud the children for sticking in with their parents and continuing to take on their education with an expeditious manner and also doing all they can to make it a positive experience during a difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, our health care workers, I would also like to identify them as 2020/21 heroes because of the testing that they have done, the Molecular [Diagnostic] Lab, the staff at the King Edward [VII] Memorial Hospital who were challenged beyond belief in regard to dealing with friends and families during the difficult times during COVID-19 when people were in the hospital in intensive care, and also being with families who lost loved ones. These are the true heroes of Bermuda for 2020/21.

So, Mr. Speaker, I and the Opposition would like to officially salute our frontline service providers, our frontline people who helped support and provide a foundation for Bermuda to succeed through the COVID-19 crises.

We salute you and we want you to recognise yourselves as the National Heroes of 2020/21.

FATHER'S DAY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all of our fathers a happy Father's Day. This should also be extended to fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers and in addition, father figures.

I know we all like to relax and cool out on Father's Day because it is one of our days. And I say when we relax, let's relax with our families and our children and grandchildren, because you make a difference in their lives. They look up to you as their heroes, their guiding star. And so, Mr. Speaker, to all the fathers in Bermuda, all the father figures in Bermuda, to the fathers in the House of Assembly, I wish you all a very happy Father's Day and do enjoy yourselves and enjoy the time that you have with your family because you are needed during this difficult time and you can be their guiding star.

Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Cole Hedley Simons. Any further speakers?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, that sounds like brother Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, it is. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good afternoon, sir.

If I put on my video, I might lose my audio, so I am [going] to keep my video off.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last few weeks anyone who has been elected, whichever side of the fence they are on, anyone who is appointed, no matter which side of the fence, or no fence, they would have gotten messages from friends, family and constituents in some cases for elected Members.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: These messages would have said something along the lines of, *My child cannot afford to pay quarantine. Or my mom wants to quarantine that event. Or they will go so far as to say, The PLP is only working for rich people.*

It goes on and on, just in different ways. What some people tend to forget are the messages we get prior. Messages such as, *I am a taxi driver and I am only taking in \$20 per day. Messages such as, My wife worked at a hotel and has been laid off for one year. Or messages such as, I have had to shut down my business as "X" amount of my staff have tested positive. And in some cases we have had to get messages such as, My family member passed away last week due to COVID-19.*

So, yes, as MPs we get them all, no matter which side of the fence we are on. As MPs, we are leaders in this country whether it be just as an MP or a Minister, either way you are a leader. So we have to ask ourselves, do we want our people out of work? No. Do we want our people shutting down their businesses? No. Do we want Mr. Augustus to come to pick up one of our constituents? No. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sad reality is that Bermuda has the dubious record of over 30 persons passing away due to COVID-19. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 21 of those deaths are due to persons who broke quarantine sometime in February. So do we need more proof of the destruction of COVID-19? I would hope not.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who would attempt to paint the picture that COVID-19 mitigation measures only take place in Bermuda, as if we are some bubble in the world that the Government just makes up rules, just does whatever it wants and just wants to irritate the people who voted for them. Let's have a look at some similar jurisdictions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the Cayman Islands, the place that people love to tell us to be like, vaccinated persons have to quarantine for five days. Unvaccinated persons quarantine for 14 days. In Anguilla, unvaccinated persons have to quarantine at their own expense. In St. Kitts, where many of us have roots, they have now had a 14-day lockdown instituted as of last week due to one incoming traveller who has now caused community spread. In St. Kitts, they have recorded the very first death due to COVID-19 this week. The prison now has 36 positive cases. They did not have this prior. But, again, it is the reality of the COVID-19 that we are dealing with. St. Kitts has now said that they only want vaccinated travellers—only. If you are not vaccinated, [they] are not interested in you being a tourist.

If we talk about division, we talk about distinction. Yes, I understand. I understand that fully. In my own family many of my family members are not vaccinated. So there is a division to some extent. In the UK, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had planned on having a full reopening of the economy on June 21st. Guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have had to delay that by at least one month because of the rise of positive cases of the Delta variant. And for those who are not scientifically knowledgeable, the Delta variant is a variant that they have identified coming out of India.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no, it is not just Bermuda. It is not just in Devonshire. It is not just in St. George's. It is not just in Somerset that rules are being put in place to stop the carnage. It is all across the world. Yet, somehow in Bermuda, we have persons who get up on Facebook, sitting around watching [INAUDIBLE] as if they just got a degree from Yale or Harvard and they know more than other persons who have studied this their whole lives. They send out these, some would say, innocent, WhatsApps but then [INAUDIBLE] tend to believe these things. Let me remind [everyone of] some sad facts in Bermuda. Since March 2020, we have had 33 of our Bermudians die from COVID-19. And if we go even more granular, 90 per cent of them were Black.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had thousands of persons who have worked all their lives, persons who have degrees, persons who have trades, unemployed for months on end. We have had to pay out \$70 million to these persons to help get them through. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$500 a week is not a lot of money. But that is what we had to do to help our people.

We have had a loss of over \$200 million in taxes coming into this country, generated by businesses that are closed down—\$200 million lost in our budget. What does that mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That means we cannot pave the roads. That means we cannot cut the trees. We cannot give deserving public servants the raises that they need. It means so much. But what it means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if we continue to have an outbreak, we will continue to have these financial losses.

Our country is on a financial precipice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We cannot afford another outbreak. So, back to this wonderful disease called COVID-19. These Internet scientists expect us to just say, *Oh, well, just open up the Island, everything is going to be fine, and we will not have any outbreaks.*

It doesn't work that way, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, unfortunately. The reality is all it takes is one, two, three persons who are positive [to] mix with the general public and we are back to where we were in March.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very easy for people to say that this Government does not care about people and this Government needs to be replaced. But what people are not seeing behind the scenes is this. A lot of what has been going on has been a contrived attack on the leadership and the entire caucus of the PLP, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are those who wear different political shirts other than green who have sat back and aided and abetted misinformation going out in society. Now, it is one thing to just win an election on your own. That is no problem. We do that all the time. But when you are going to lie and go put Bermudian people's lives in jeopardy to further your political means, that is a problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because none of us want to see Mr. Augustus pull up in our neighbourhood. But when you tell people, *Don't*

wear a mask, don't do this, don't follow your regulations. David Burt is this, MP Burgess is the other, all of that is contrived to get people to disobey regulations put in place to save their lives.

So, I say to the people of Bermuda, be upset! Call us! WhatsApp us. Ask us questions! That is what we are here for. And I challenge every MP to answer those questions. Yesterday I answered at least five different phone calls from persons due to these upcoming regulations. But if you are an elected member, it is not your job to spread misinformation. It is your job to know the facts and tell the people the facts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move into [National] Heroes Day, I want to thank all those young persons who have been on the front line taking nasal swabs, who been on the front line assisting, giving vaccines, to those persons who are calling to make sure persons come to their appointments, and so on and so forth. Because they are the true heroes of the last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Famous.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognises Honourable Member Mr. Pearman. You have the floor.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not usually speak in motion to adjourn and I only intend to do so if I think that there is something particularly important that I need to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I spoke earlier today on health legislation. I did so holding the brief in the capacity on behalf of the Shadow Minister. But I would like to just touch on this subject as myself, as MP Pearman alone.

What MP Famous just said is very interesting. He said that yesterday he had five phone calls on the regulations. Let me start by saying he is not alone. All of the MPs, I am sure, and certainly the MPs I have spoken with, have had phone calls, emails, conversations on the street, conversations in the office, conversations with masks, conversations without masks, conversations with family members, with friends, wondering what the heck is going on, on Sunday.

What is this Government doing?

This is not, with respect to MP Famous, a contrived attack on the PLP. This is a problem where the Government has simply lost control of what is going on. You talk about answering phone calls on the regulations. Where are the regulations? This is Bermuda's Parliament. Why were no regulations brought before this Honourable House today, in advance of Sunday, so that democracy can flourish and a debate could have been had about [this]?

They are nowhere to be seen.

We are told that they might appear on a website between now and Sunday. But with respect, Mr. Speaker, and with respect to MP Famous, that is just not good enough.

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: These are people's democratic rights and they are not just important, they are sacrosanct. And we as elected Members of this House of Assembly are supposed to defend them. And when the Government gets something wrong, we are supposed to point it out. And to their credit, certain Members of Parliament did so today, and not merely Members of Parliament on my side of the aisle. And to those who spoke bravely and boldly, I commend you. And to those who suggest this is all a contrived attack on the PLP, I denounce you—because it is not!

It is about democracy and human rights and constitutional rights. It is about the right of free movement of people. It is about the right not to be deprived of your personal assets. It is about the right of any citizen to return to their homeland and not be prevented from doing so by an arbitrary law which prevents them from doing so without prior payment. These things are . . . and MP Burgess earlier today. He and I do not often agree. I will be fair. But sometimes we do, and on this one we do. He spoke to discrimination. I would put it slightly differently. I would speak to what is right and what is wrong. What is *right* is to recognise that quarantine may well be required in a health crisis. What is *wrong* is to demand that that quarantine occur in a government facility and *then charge the people for it!* That is not right!

It is not necessary for someone coming in who has chosen to be unvaccinated to have to go to a government facility and pay for it. They can go to their home. They can quarantine at home! It is not necessary, and if you are asked why this is necessary, the only answer that is ever given is, *Oh, well we can't enforce it.* What happens if someone flees? Well, if someone wants to flee and break the law, you don't think they can do that from a government facility? Of course, they can.

So, there are going to be people who follow the law, who recognise the rule of law, who respect the rules and try and follow them, and there will be people who don't. And I am afraid that is just life. But

that is no excuse to make bad law. It is an explanation why a good law must be properly enforced.

And what we need to do, with respect, Mr. Speaker, is not mandate Bermudians to go to government facilities and pay through the nose to quarantine, where they have chosen—as is their right—not to have the vaccine, but to require for medical reasons, a home quarantine. It is as simple as that. And if we are concerned that a home quarantine is going to allow for the spread of COVID-19, then we enforce a home quarantine. How do you do that? By a phone call to confirm they are there. Or by a police car or Regiment car driving by and saying *Hi* in a friendly, nonthreatening way. That is what's about right and wrong. That is about human rights.

Mr. Speaker, the other matter that is very important here is the suggestion that Bermudians cannot return home unless they prove prepayment for the quarantine, those Bermudians who have chosen not to be vaccinated. Again, to me, that boggles the mind. If we cast our mind back [to] a few months ago we had mercy flights to bring Bermudians back, unquarantined, the unvaccinated Bermudians. Bermudians who may or may not have had COVID-19. Some Bermudians who did have COVID-19. But we paid to bring them back because that was our responsibility as a Government, as a society and as a community. So, why not mercy flights now? Why suddenly will people be stranded from their homeland simply because they made a personal medical decision not to have the vaccine?

And let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. I have had the vaccine. My family has had the vaccine, or at least those who are old enough to do so. And I would support anyone considering having the vaccine to speak to their doctor and decide whether or not it is right for them to have the vaccine. So, I am not coming at this in some sort of ardent way. What I am saying is, it is about right and wrong. And what is being planned and proposed will treat one category of people differently from another. And I just don't understand how that can be justified, and it is very difficult to understand how it can be justified without actually seeing the laws that will be applied to people.

So, when I get phone calls, MP Famous, as you have, about the regulations, and emails and texts and social media tweets, et cetera, it is very difficult to answer it. So, I commend you if you have managed to answer those questions, because I am having a hard time doing so.

What do I say to those people who are traveling with children? What do I say? I got an email today [from someone] with children under a particular age, young children. It is simply not clear. And until it is clear, it is simply not fair.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will end on that. This is an opportunity for the Government to have a rethink and for the Government to get it right. I am not suggesting that we abandon all the regulations. I am not suggest-

ing that Bermuda should be a jurisdiction that runs wild. I recognise the health pandemic that exists. I recognise the problems in other jurisdictions. But on these two issues this Government has it wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker, Ianthia Simmons-Wade.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade, you have the floor. You have your 20 minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Turn on your video.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: My video. I'm sorry. Is my video on?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. As long as our borders remain open, the Indian variant will come into this country. The question is, not *if*, it is *when*.

Our decision is to protect the borders, not to close the borders. The Indian variant is rapidly spreading all around the world. As Chris Famous said, Mr. Speaker, 7 per cent of the COVID-19 variants is the Indian variant in England. In other countries, the percentage of individuals with the Indian variant is rapidly increasing. The World Health Organization, Mr. Speaker, considers this variant to be of global concern. This mutant is contagious, and it is more deadly than any of the other COVID-19 variants.

The vaccine has proven to protect people from this variant as well. The decision to do mandatory quarantine was not a decision that was taken lightly. So many things were put on the table, but this decision was based on science. Many people question how quickly the vaccine came into being . . . rather, all the conspiracy theories exist. But no one can question, Mr. Speaker, the number of positive cases and the number of deaths that have resulted from this vaccine [*sic*]. I do not think people who are concerned about the mandatory vaccine have found themselves in a situation where someone has gotten gravely ill from COVID-19 or someone who has died from COVID-19, because you know what it feels [like] to lose somebody who has had COVID-19.

In regard to calls, I have had many, many calls. Many calls. People are concerned because they

cannot travel because they don't have the vaccine. I have encouraged many people to speak to their doctors, Mr. Speaker, to determine if the vaccine is the right thing for [them]. Everything was put on the table, as I mentioned, when this decision was being made, including quarantine at home.

There is no rulebook, Mr. Speaker, to this decision. The Government has made a decision, as I said, based on science, to protect our borders, to protect you, to protect our economy. Mr. Speaker, this will not last forever, but we want our country to be safe from this very, very deadly variant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Simmons-Wade.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Adams. You have your 20 minutes.

FATHER'S DAY

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to begin actually by wishing all of the fathers a very happy Father's Day, and this one as you know is quite—

The Speaker: You are a new member to the club, right?

Mr. Jache Adams: I am a new member to the club, absolutely.

The Speaker: There you go.

Mr. Jache Adams: I secondly want to thank MP Simmons-Wade actually for stepping in because she allowed me to calm down—

The Speaker: Minister, your camera is not on. So, if you could adjust your camera.

Okay, there you go. Continue on.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mr. Jache Adams: And I just wanted to thank MP Simmons-Wade because she allowed me to calm down, because I was almost eager to respond to MP Pearman, but she allowed me to calm down and really start to focus on the message at hand.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you know, having been first elected in October, I am a new politician. I have been around politics practically my whole life as my grandfather, a former Government Minister, was elected when I was about 10 years old, and as I grew

older, so did my interest in politics. So, I ultimately decided to get involved with my party several years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I then found myself constantly thinking of ways to enhance our tourism product, ways to improve our education system, reduce the cost of living and constructive ways to deter our young men and women from using or selling drugs and so on. And you see, Mr. Speaker, I have had conversations with those older than me. I have felt as though we have gone off the track and I would often enjoy listening to their stories of how things used to be. I then spoke with my peers with fresh and new ideas, who value innovation, whose desire is for their country to be, dare I say, progressive.

Mr. Speaker, I have had so many of those conversations, whether it is about independence or budget debates, the Uighurs, the Pathways to Status and I can remember saying to myself, *Why doesn't the Government just do this? Or, Things would be so much better if they had just done that.* But, Mr. Speaker, now that I am privileged to enter the room, as part of the Government discussing policies for this country, I can certainly say that leadership is not easy. Watch our leader, Cabinet and back bench colleagues discuss for countless hours on topics knowing that no matter what decision is made, there will be a group that is upset. It is an interesting space to be in, knowing that no matter what you decide, someone will be upset. And to then be asked to make these levels of decisions regularly is just exhausting.

But, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is a nation of true diversity. That is our *real* beauty. Men, women, Black, white, young, old, rich, poor, gay, straight, religious and those who are not; those with doctorate degrees and those with a GED; those who believe in independence and those who don't; those unionised and those not interested; those for Somerset and unfortunately, those for St. George's. I could go on, but the point is that none are more important than the other, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jache Adams: And all deserve to be heard.

The Speaker: Continue on.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I thought the gentleman had said something incorrect. My bad.

The Speaker: No problem. Continue on, MP Adams.

Mr. Jache Adams: So, it is important that all deserve to be heard, Mr. Speaker. I mention it because with this beauty of diversity comes an understanding that as a people, we just don't all agree. We all have dif-

ferent experiences, different visions for this country, different expectations of this Government. And so, I have quickly learned that at the end of the day you just cannot be everything for everybody.

Mr. Speaker, the mandatory quarantine facility is a great example. Certainly, an unpopular decision to many Bermudians, and we accept that. We understand the frustration and the reasons why they are upset. But as I have said on many occasions, we must be prepared to go great lengths to protect the health and safety of our people.

Mr. Speaker, too many Bermudians have been sick or died from this pandemic. Too many of our health care workers are exhausted fighting this pandemic. Too many businesses have shut down leaving people unemployed because of this pandemic, and so I say now is the time we focus on moving beyond the pandemic and *recalibrate*, as my colleague from constituency 2 likes to say, and refocus on our initiatives that we were elected on: A balanced budget, education reform, universal health care, lowering the cost of living, renewable energy projects, developing FinTech, a national job strategy, building a nation of owners, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, put simply, we cannot deliver and best serve the people of Bermuda if all of our time, energy and resources are used fighting a pandemic. So, the question is, How can the Government best reduce the potential of another COVID-19 outbreak? What policies have other countries implemented that allow them to now open their economy? What is the data telling us?

Mr. Speaker, several colleagues of mine referenced the ways we have handled the COVID-19 crisis well in 2020. But I would like to add that we trusted and were guided by the science then, and it is prudent that we continue to do so now. Despite what some believe, Mr. Speaker, the mandatory hotel or quarantine hotel decision is not meant to force people to get vaccinated. It is not designed to make anyone feel wrong or guilty for not being vaccinated. And it is certainly not motivated by some secret agenda for the Premier and others to gain millions of dollars from vaccine companies, Bill Gates and hotel owners. Mr. Speaker, it is aimed to protect this country from another outbreak of future variants, aimed to save the lives of our people, aimed to position ourselves as a safe destination for tourists, aimed to avoid another economic shutdown, aimed to respect the fact that we only have one hospital, Mr. Speaker. It is aimed to move us beyond the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I must reiterate, it is the science that guides the Government's decision, not any desire or aim to discriminate against anyone. Health care and medical professionals, both internationally and locally advise that a vaccinated person is significantly less likely to transmit the virus than a nonvaccinated person.

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

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I accept—

The Speaker: Point of order. Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[*Standing Order 19(7)*]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: We heard this earlier, Mr. Speaker.

If you put this on a large screen, the Honourable Member is reading most of what he is saying. I appreciate that it was pointed out before to him. We are watching very, very closely here, and the Honourable Member is reading. If he could continue on as he is, he is making a *great* statement here, I would appreciate it if he could continue on without referring to and looking at his notes continuously.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Cannonier.

MP Adams, I know you are a new Member and just be mindful of the facts that notes can be referred to, but not read from.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I long for us to meet in—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am lost as to how the Member who is making the accusation against MP—

The Speaker: I am not going to go back and forth.

[*Crosstalk*]

The Speaker: Deputy, Deputy, Deputy, let me stop you.

I am not going to go back and forth. I was talking to the new Member. I am addressing the new Member. I am comfortable with who we are and it does not need any further input. So, let me finish addressing the new Member, please. Thank you.

MP Adams, I am just reminding you of the fact that there is a process, and I am going to leave you to be guided by the process. Okay? Thank you.

Mr. Jache Adams: Yes. Mr. Speaker, what I will say is I actually long for the opportunity when we can actually meet in person, so that the Opposition can see my notes, and so that we can sit there and throw this

whole entire debate out. But, I will progress, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I accept—

The Speaker: Continue on.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I accept because the science tells us both that vaccinated and nonvaccinated persons can catch the virus. But the science goes on to demonstrate that a vaccinated person is significantly less likely to pass it on.

So, Mr. Speaker, if the Government is trying to get back to a sense of normality whilst making sure the health and safety remain the priority of the Government, we must look at the data from various sources objectively, appreciate the delicate balance and use a risk-based approach. And by using a risk-based approach, the focus must be our understanding [of] those who pose a greater risk of transmitting the virus.

Mr. Speaker, the final point [that] I would like to remind MP Pearman [of is] that we have tried alternative solutions before, including quarantining at home and it did not work. We are confident in saying that the latest outbreak was a result of a single person carrying the UK variant [who] broke the rules. We really are living in a time—

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[*Misleading*]

Mr. Scott Pearman: He is misleading the House. We did try quarantining at home previously and it *did work*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Continue on. Just be guided by the comments. Continue on.

Mr. Jache Adams: If I am going to be guided by the comments, let him be guided by the science. It did not work.

The Speaker: Continue on. Just speak to me. Don't get side-tracked. Don't get side-tracked.

Mr. Jache Adams: Well, I want to get side-tracked to show him that I am not reading.

But anyway, we are really living in a time where a single person's selfishness can affect the entire country tremendously. But, Mr. Speaker, I will end with this: As my colleagues have emphasised, these restrictions are not forever. As we continue to assess results and data, we commit ourselves to reassess our policies. And so, come Sunday, I know we all wel-

come the mention of lifting of further restrictions. I am appreciative of the direction we are headed, and I will continue to do my part to see us move beyond the pandemic. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Adams.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not need that much time.

I just wanted to follow on from that young brilliant Member of Parliament who comes from a stock of folk that can look straight at you and present their word as if it were read. But as you see, he is longing for the day when he can be in the House so that his brilliance can be revealed.

The Speaker: I will just remind you to flick on your camera if you can.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: It is on, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Ahh, we hear you, but we do not see you.

Okay, now we see you. Continue.

JUNTEENTH

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend in the United States is now referred to as *Juneteenth*, and to many, Juneteenth was unknown, and much of the true history of us in the African diaspora is unknown. And a lot of times, the truth is conveniently hidden and not told, and unfortunately not celebrated.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, in that vein I certainly had the opportunity over the past 10 days or so to become re-acquainted with the world as we once knew it because of the pandemic. I, like all of us, have been confined, rightfully so, and living under restrictions.

I want to start off by saying *thank you* to the State of New York, the Government, especially the State Historic Preservation Office, for allowing me, in my capacity as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of

the Golf Courses, to observe behind-the-scenes one of their most iconic state park golf courses along with a small contingent from Bermuda. The fulness of that visit will be revealed officially to the board and to the Minister and the Ministry. But I just wanted to take the opportunity to say *thank you* to those on the floor of this House for reaching across the divide with us to partner in ways which I think will be mutually beneficial as we learn from each other about how to do things better and more efficiently, and how government-to-government operates.

It also presented me an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to traverse around in a space that I am well aware of and have spent much of my life in. And that is the space of tourism going through various communities that are very important to our tourism product. Areas like Newport; Southampton, Long Island, and Glen Cove, Long Island; and Bethpage; and Bethesda; and Pittsburgh are areas in which persons enjoy golf and many communities there are very familiar with Bermuda.

I am speaking on this today because, Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of what someone told me long years ago when I was an emerging young talent coming out of college. They said, *You know, you could be a big fish in a small pond, or you could be out there in the big pond in the United States and around the world.* As I ply my trade, Mr. Speaker, I prefer to be in the big pond with the best-of-the-best plying my trade—make no mistakes about it—notwithstanding that I love our beloved Bermuda deeply and will do all I can to support Bermuda, support Bermuda's people.

I speak this in the context, Mr. Speaker, of traversing around these areas that are very important to us in a level of freedom that they now enjoy with very little wearing of masks. And when I went into the post office this morning, I had my mask on hand and certainly took every opportunity to follow the protocols there and recognise it. But it was easy to see that the people whom we will be reaching out to attract are becoming ever so more accustomed to life as they want to do it.

And as I took the opportunity to reflect on the legislation that has been before us and where we are as a people, I could not help but have my mind cast back to that small fishbowl, respectfully, that we are. And I am also reminded that Bermuda [with] 60,000 [people] is smaller than the Glen Cove community that I was in, smaller than probably the Bethesda area that I drove through, maybe a similar size to a portion of the Southampton community or maybe even the Newport community.

The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that this little, small fishbowl that we live in, although sophisticated, although connected with the entire world that we live in technology-wise, businesswise, especially in international finance, has to address this pandemic a little bit more differently, particularly when we

have flights that connect us with Europe. And kudos to the Minister of Transport for connecting us with the Azores. I am looking forward to further news of connections in the Caribbean and other places.

But the small fishbowl that is Bermuda has to look at these matters a little bit differently than the communities that I have been spending my time in here, reconnecting with my trade, reconnecting with the tourism product that we hope to attract, and trying to figure out how it is that we must go about it in a way that protects us and ensures that we can start participating economically in the economic resurgence that is taking place in the United States, our closest trading partner.

So I offer that not to be critical, but to present a sense of reality, that we as a Government, and we as a people must always take the time to step outside of ourselves and look back at where we are. That is certainly something I have been trained to do in my trade, to be able to step outside of oneself and be able to look back to see the space in which we are at. And from that standpoint, Mr. Speaker, it is not an easy position that we as a Government are faced with. It is an unenviable position that we are faced with.

FATHER'S DAY

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You know, Mr. Speaker, as I reflect on this particular weekend, it is somewhat sentimental to me. I feel duty-bound to reflect on how special it is. It is 50 years since I entered the world of golf. When we were young fellows, Mr. Speaker, I was a goalkeeper. My dream was to be Chelsea's goalkeeper. My dream was to take Peter Bonetti's place and goal. My dream was to be out there with Clyde Best, because in 1969 I was a first-year student at Berkeley. That was my goal. The Lord had other plans for me. By the time 1979 rolled around, I was the Bermuda Open Champion invited to play in tournaments all around the globe. So who knows what the world holds for a young person?

Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago a young Wilfred "Ralph" Fray was only 23 years old, and he will be celebrated in a golf tournament next week at Ocean View. (Thank you to Brian Morris for arranging that.) He met his death at 23 years old, a promising young Bermudian. Fifty years ago in 1971, Port Royal Golf Course was only about six months old, Mr. Speaker, and gave birth to my talent and many others from that community of which it was built.

Fifty years ago a young man, Walter King, would come up from Bailey's Bay and be the golf pro and inspire many of us, Mr. Speaker. He would be a reserve in Cup Match in 1968, but would later go on to greatness in 1970. And 50 years ago he was the reigning Bermuda Open Champion. He would go on in 1976 to become a Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker. A young man who adored him carried his suitcase for him, went to Bailey's Bay games from White Hill,

would follow his footsteps and is speaking here to you today, Mr. Speaker. History matters! Role models matter!

Father's Day in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, for persons like me is more than just the father whose name you carry. And I thank my father because he was a goalkeeper, and I became a goalkeeper. But the good Lord had other plans for me. He did not want me to be a goalkeeper. He did not want me to be a cricket or Cup Match player. He wanted me to be a golfer for various reasons. And one of those reasons is to understand the world of golf, understand the great things about it and understand the things in golf that we need to change, Mr. Speaker.

The racism that exists in the world today has been very prevalent in the sport which I love. Public golf like Port Royal has made it possible for us to move beyond the restrictiveness that private golf has offered in this world. The diversity that we long to celebrate, even in 2021, was practiced at Port Royal Golf Course in 1971 when young fellows like myself at age 14 and 13 came together with young men from private golf course communities and got to know one another. Diversity was not something that was written about; diversity was something that we lived, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said before on the floor of this House, Mr. Speaker, I know of circumstances in modern-day Bermuda where exclusionary practices [which were] practiced to prevent people like Louis Corbin, Herman "Tucci" Bascome, Uncle Leonard Jones, and Earl and George Lowe, and those great golfers from realising their true potential exist right under our eyes and smile at us and offer us money in charities as well, Mr. Speaker. I know that still exists today.

If necessary, we must have the strength and the courage to stand up to it and root it out! It is not good enough for us to keep looking at surveys that tell us that the people of African descent in this country and those who care to stand up for people of African descent from this country are disproportionately represented in the economic fortunes of this country. It is not good enough to look in the prisons and see that we are the overwhelming population of prisoners. It is not good enough to say, *Well, you know, you have got a majority of the population, so it should be so.* That is not good enough for us to accept those types of simplistic arguments for the real institutional structural racism that runs rampant in Bermuda. Even during a pandemic, it still occurs, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes you have got to have the courage to stand up against it, Mr. Speaker. And I am here to tell you that I am standing up against it. I am fighting against it, and I will continue to help those young people who are coming along, who are young like I used to be, to understand how it is manifested and how it is cultivated in a community to live on for 50 more years as it has done from the time in which we were the diversity that the world needed to follow.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to move this country forward, let this fishbowl be an example for the rest of the world. Let it be an example for how we do things fairly. Let it be an example for how we live and practice the diversity rather than write about it and hope someone catches on and it is a nice phrase. And let us root out those who are not honest brokers in this process, Mr. Speaker. Let us have that courage, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on this National Heroes weekend, I heard someone mention that we have not announced a National Hero this year. But let us celebrate the ones that we have already. Let us embrace what has been brought to this country by all of our forefathers. Let us embrace all of those who continue to be the fathers we need in our country. And we have many, many great role models whom we must celebrate on this Father's Day. Let us aim to make a slogan for fathers in Bermuda in much the same way that, if you said that to Mother's Day, the first thing that comes to you is that *Every day is Mother's Day*, and rightfully so. But let us aim to make every day Father's Day, because we need to have as many male role models as we can in our country.

Mr. Speaker, on the last motion to adjourn I spoke very passionately about the death of Jordan Outerbridge, the son of my good friend Lincoln Outerbridge. And I know that for fathers like brother Lincoln Outerbridge, this will be a very hollow Father's Day indeed. *If you know something, say something*. Let us help our community get beyond a place where murders are not commonplace. Let us get beyond a place where telling what is right is not commonplace [and] telling what is right *is* commonplace, where people are not afraid to come forward and provide the information and the evidence that is required. Failing to do so, Mr. Speaker, only gives credence and comfort to those who would prefer to operate in a space that holds us all at ransom in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy Father's Day, Mr. Speaker. God bless you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister. Yes, you have your 20 minutes.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am quite sure I will not need 20 minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I got motivated to enter into this motion to adjourn by the comments that were made by a couple of persons here today. You know,

we are entering into a phase of battle against this scourge of COVID-19 at a very unique time right now. Bermuda as a country has done very well since the outbreak that started earlier this year. Last time I checked we had four active cases, and I believe the last result showed that there were five in addition to those. So once we as a country get to the point that we are at, the only place that new variants can be introduced to our country is at the border.

I think, listening to the comments earlier today and the comments that I have heard thus far, we are all cognisant of this fact. We are all cognisant that we have to figure out a way to protect our borders. The Government has made a decision to go with mandated quarantine in the way that it has as a way of protecting our borders. Now, let us just reflect on that for just a minute here. We have the argument that says that people should be able to quarantine at home, and we also have the Government's position that we should have our mandated quarantine facilities. We also have persons saying that it is discriminatory as such.

When I looked at this, [I thought to myself], it takes leaders. And we also had MP Cannonier mention earlier about *leaders need to lead*. I just want to talk about this for a bit. Leading also means saying something that is unpopular and getting people to understand why an unpopular thing is the best thing for them. Being a leader is not always going by what we will call *populism* by just saying things to get people excited because you know that is what they want to hear, even though it might not be the thing that is best for them to be hearing at that time.

I reflect back on talking to my constituents. I live in an area that is majority Black, and people are loath . . . you know, they have their reasons of why they do not want to be vaccinated. So I have pockets of persons who are not vaccinated. But I also have pockets of those same people, when we do go on lockdown, I am responsive to them as well. And I will visit them, and I will make sure they are okay. Sometimes it requires me to pick up some groceries for them because they have not been working; they do not qualify for the unemployment insurance. So I get to see that part of it as well. And I do hope that most of our MPs also get to see that part.

As the Minister of Education, earlier today we were asked, *How many days have students missed?* And I guesstimated it is about 20. I have actually gone back, and the Commissioner has let me know that it has actually been 12 school days that have been missed in this year, 12 days out of 200 that our students normally get. That may seem like a little bit, but that is a lot for our students. That translates into two and a half weeks of lost learning time. And so when we have an opportunity to protect ourselves from going into lockdown, having additional measures being put in place, persons not being able to work, companies being threatened with closure because they are

unable to generate any income, we have an opportunity to prevent that from happening.

We then have to have the wherewithal as leaders amongst us to have those honest conversations with our constituents and ask them questions. When they talk about, *It's unfair, Or, We're being discriminated against. We shouldn't have to. We should be able to quarantine at home.* Have the conversations about, *Is that weekend trip worth being on lockdown for 12 months with no income because a variant has been released?* Have those types of conversations. And I am not saying that to dissuade anyone from wanting to travel or whatever, but give them both sides of the story. And be really, really honest about it. Be honest.

And as politicians, we have to have something within us that allows us to have those honest conversations with our constituents and let our constituents know that something that happens in one area is going to affect something that happens in the other area. And we can play the game all day, and we can talk about, *Okay, what if I do more over here and less over here and figure out what that balance is?* But right now the balance is the quarantining in hotels.

But I want the people of Bermuda to know that this decision was not taken lightly. This decision is not something that is going to be in place forever. I was speaking to a constituent today. They got one of the memes that said, *It's going to cost \$12,000 for two weeks in one of the hotels.* And I said, *That's a non-sense. That's simply just not true.* The prices are high, and most people will see that, and we need to figure out how we can reduce that for sure. For sure we need to do that. But I challenge everyone in the House to actually talk to that person when they get that meme. Instead of agreeing because it makes everybody feel happy, challenge that. Challenge and say, *No, that's not right. That's not going to happen.* Challenge them to see the bigger picture.

One of the things that helped Bermuda last year when we were on lockdown is we all worked together. We all knew that if we did our part, we all knew that if we did the things that we had to do, it would keep our deaths down. It would keep our hospitalisations down. It would stop the spread because as an island, at some point the disease has nowhere to go. And the only way it could be re-invigorated is through our borders. So why not take the opportunity to protect our borders?

MP Famous talked about talking to constituents. You know, the same, *Those who feel it know it.* How many of us have talked to . . . I have a constituent who had a 16-year-old who said, *Mom, I can't breathe.* They were COVID-19 positive. They woke up one Friday night, they could not breathe. Do you know what that does to a mother? She took her to the hospital. She was fine. She was in the hospital for three days, came home fine. But that is the type of stories that you are hearing, the stories of children being out

partying, coming home. Their positive [infection] spreads to their parents. And I know of a case where a parent has gone on to their glory because of that. And you are sitting down and you are talking to your constituents, and they feel it. They feel it then.

So we have to be leaders to point out to our constituents the dangers that they might not possibly see at this time. And there is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with that. We have an obligation to protect both the people who have been vaccinated and the people who do not want to get vaccinated, because that is their choice. We have to be bold, and we have to do the types of things that allow us to protect the entire Island.

So we talk about discrimination. Discrimination for me means that you are protecting one group and not protecting another group. This policy protects all of us. It protects every single person in Bermuda. It protects their health. It protects their livelihood. It allows our children to remain in school. It allows our people to go back to work. It allows our companies to prosper. It allows our tourists to come in. It protects all of us. So I look at it from a different point of view than some of my colleagues, and that is okay, because having healthy debate is what democracy is about. Having the opportunity to speak your mind, to let people know this is how you feel about a situation and respectfully have discussion, that is how we work.

So as I said, governing is not easy. It requires us to make difficult decisions most of the time. There are times we make decisions that everybody is happy about. Everybody is excited. Everybody says, *Yay! Let's do that!* But the bulk of the time it takes difficult decisions. And it takes a tough skin because there are a lot of things that are floating around there that just simply are not true. And as MP Famous pointed out, when I read them (I do, myself) I am saying, *Well, what political entity wrote this?* because it is a style of writing. You have seen it before. You understand it. But we have to see through that noise. And we have to move through that noise.

So when we hear colleagues saying, *Well, why can't we quarantine at home and make the fines stiffer and punish people faster?*, what good does it do to punish the one who has already gone on and infected someone else? They have already done the damage. They have already set the country back, or potentially set the country back. But we are going to go find them, arrest them, put them in jail. What is the point of doing it then when we have an opportunity to prevent them from becoming criminalised and infecting others? Let us look at it from a different perspective.

If there were a way for people to quarantine at home—and trust me, the Government is looking for this—that prevents them from having guests come over, outside of having someone stand outside their house 24 hours a day, those are the types of logistics. We have heard about, when MP Cannonier talked

earlier about, *We need to tell people what is going on*. That is what is going on. I know of people who have snuck [out] to see their friends because they just could not wait through the 14 days to be over. Because the person had tested negative on day 8, so they said, *Oh, well, I could go and see him; it's day 8*, and turned out positive because the person they went to see turned up positive between day 8 and day 14.

It happens. It is human nature you want to go visit your friends; you want people to come over. How do we mitigate that? When all of us are saying, *Quarantine at home*, let us talk about that. And when you are talking to your constituents, when you talking to the general public and they are asking you, *Why can't we quarantine at home?*, start to have that conversation. Because who knows? There could be a viable idea that comes from that, that type of conversation, a viable idea that we can move to a regime where we are quarantining at home, a regime that I know in my heart of hearts we will eventually move to. But at this time it is just something that is not viable.

As I said, we will not be in this restriction for long. I am confident that we will move to a regime where we can quarantine at home. But in the meantime, we have to mitigate what we have right here in front of us. And that is a country that we have managed to control and get down to single-digit active cases, knowing very well that the only way that additional cases can be introduced to our country now is through our borders. We owe it to all of our countrymen, we owe it to every single one of us, we owe it to our children, we owe it to *us* to do what we can do to ensure that we put everything possible in place to prevent this virus from entering our country again.

And so we have come up with something that we think is striking the right balance to move forward. As I said, as this thing moves on, that balance will be adjusted even more so we can get to the point that we want to get to.

So I just wanted to take this time out. I was listening; I was not expecting to speak, but I do want to take this time out to let the people know that we hear them, we understand them. We see the comments on Facebook. We see the comments on WhatsApp. We see the five-page letters that get sent via email. We see all of that. But we also want you to see it from our perspective. And our perspective is, as a Government we have to protect our entire country. We have to figure out a way for our country to get up and running. When Sunday comes, the restrictions will fall away. There will be no curfew. There will be different mask-wearing policies in place. Large group gatherings will go up to 100. We have gotten to a place where we can almost get kind of back to normal. Do we want to jeopardise that?

Do I want to take a weekend trip to New York because I just have to get off the Island, and come back knowing that if I go home and I do not do something that I am supposed to do, or someone just hap-

pens to come by and see me and they catch something that I did not know that I could transmit, that my weekend trip is now equal to a month on lockdown, a month with no one being paid, a month of our students not being able to get the benefit of being in their classrooms? I work for the people. Everything I do is for the people. And if I know that making a sacrifice on my behalf is going to help the people, I am going to make that sacrifice. Because I know at some point I am going to be able to do what I want to do as we move forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to thank you for allowing me to make these few comments. I did want to wish all of our fathers, especially our new one, MP Adams, a happy Father's Day on Sunday. And please have a safe and enjoyable [National] Heroes Day on Monday, colleagues. I look forward to seeing you in two weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will be extremely brief.

I must admit that it was my honourable colleague who (well, he is taking off his jacket now) just finished speaking who actually made me want to speak for a few moments. And I obviously appreciate that I have been speaking a lot today with the other two Bills. But I just want to say really quickly I understand the concerns that are being raised by members of the community. You know, I also have family and friends and constituents who are raising concerns as it relates to some of the policies that are being implemented by the Government.

I know that my colleagues are inundated with emails on a daily basis with respect to concerns, questions and so forth that they receive. I suspect, with the greatest respect, that I probably have double that, because most people are going to start with the Premier and/or the Minister of Health with respect to their concerns. And I have probably a 90 per cent track record of actually personally responding to the emails that I receive concerning complaints, questions, comments and concerns.

As a Government, it is never easy when you are trying to make decisions that will have an adverse impact on members of your community. And I am certain that persons . . . It is interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, because when I have an opportunity to speak to people personally who come up to me in the

grocery store and so forth and say, *What's Government's position about this? Why are you doing this?*, when you actually talk to them individually about it, they are like, *Hmm*. And you can see they are pausing for a moment like, *Yeah, I get it*.

At the end of the day, we have to balance a number of competing interests. And one, of course, is the health and safety of our population. And secondly, it is also the issue of the economics. And I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, if we had to go into a third wave and another lockdown, the number of businesses that will have to close that are barely hanging on by a thread and will be forced to close because of the economic impact of another lockdown, which will then have a trickle-down effect on the people whom they employ, which will require us to knock on the door of the Minister of Finance and say, *We need more money to provide benefits for persons who are not working*. There are businesses hanging on by a thread.

I was speaking to somebody just last week, Saturday (and I will not call her name), in the grocery store. She was making comments, and we talked about it. I said, *You know, you work for someone. But there are some businesses . . .* She was in IB, and they [suffered] a lesser impact than some of the Ma-and-Pa smaller businesses with respect to COVID-19 because she can continue to operate whilst at home. But the reality is that there are so many businesses that have been so adversely affected by the impact of COVID-19 that another lockdown will be the death knell.

And when we think about the issue concerning our children and the impact of having to work from home and work remotely, as opposed to having that personal interaction with their teachers and with their peers, we know this has unfortunately been a disadvantage to them. And to have to go back into another lockdown where our children will potentially suffer educationally, where the economic aspects of that which I just spoke about will also feature, we have to weigh all of those competing interests.

These have been the most difficult decisions that any government, any government has had to make. Because none of us sitting around this table has ever lived during a pandemic. And to make decisions on a situation that is evolving . . . the only thing constant about COVID-19 is its name. And it actually changed. There is nothing. There is no rulebook. We are trying to do things and address things based on the science, based on the data and based on the information in front of us. And not every decision we make is going to be popular to every person. But I can [assure] the people of Bermuda that this Government is committed to continuing in our remit of protecting our population, ensuring that we can preserve our economy as best as possible and minimise the adverse impact [on] every country in this world.

One thing about Bermuda, we are not another world. We are all . . . universally, every country in this

world is impacted by COVID-19. And we are seeing it because of our small size. So when one person passes away—and we have had 22 because of this last outbreak—each and every one of us has been impacted by that. Whether we know the people and the families directly or not, we have all individually suffered and mourned with those families.

The reality is there is no playbook for COVID-19. And I am confident that what we are doing with respect to the policies that we are implementing . . . [they] are not popular. They are not. We know that. But I am also confident of the fact that they are being delivered for the best interests of Bermuda and protecting Bermuda. And what we saw in February by the introduction of one variant, and we know that there is that Delta variant surfacing in the world that is far more transmissible than any of the other variants, we need to do what we can to protect the 64,000 people who live on this Island.

Yes, our decisions may not be popular in some quarters. I am confident by the fact that almost 75 per cent of the population, the population who are eligible for immunisation, have taken that first dose. So we are getting there, and we continue. When we have this mandatory quarantine with respect to the facilities, that is not going to be forever! This is going to be a finite period. Because as we continue to roll out our immunisation plan and we see that we are controlling the aspects of importation of the variant, et cetera, those things will change. And that is one of the reasons why we continuously say, *Today is one day*. But we are not anticipating . . . God, none of us wants to be sitting here in September dealing with this again! I know I do not. I certainly do not.

But I am sure I can speak for all 36 of us and all 64,000 people in Bermuda that this is not something that we want to repeat. We cannot continue this rollercoaster where we are open one day and we are closed the other, we are open one day and we are closed the other. Our economy cannot sustain that. Our psyche cannot sustain that. And certainly from a physical perspective with respect to the variants that might enter and the effects that that might have on people physically and/or as a result of serious illness, death and overwhelming our hospital as well as our health services, we cannot sustain that.

In this regard I can assure the members of the public that every concern that has been raised today and before, we have considered it as a Government. Sometimes I get emails from people who go, *Have you considered this?* And I am like, *That is a very good idea, but it has been raised by a billion people*. Because we have technical people who are part of this process, we have Members of Parliament, both [Government and] Opposition, as well as Members of Parliament who are all intimately involved in this process. So I can assure you that all of the things that are being considered, we have as a Government considered those.

And we are making the best decisions with the information that we have for the preservation of our public, ensuring that we can be safe, ensuring that we can continue having an economic prosperity that we all want, as well as mixing and striking the right balance so that we can continue on [despite] COVID-19, which unfortunately is still a pandemic, and it is here with us for a while. But we do believe that the decisions that we are making, Mr. Speaker, are in the best interests, weighing all of the competing interests.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none.

Premier.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I did not want you to bang the gavel on me.

The Speaker: I was reaching.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I am sure and certain you are, Mr. Speaker.

I will not be funny. You might want to bang the gavel up at the West End, but let me not get into sore subject of Cup Match. I will leave that alone.

The Speaker: Yes.

‘REVOLVE AROUND THE WORLD’ LARGE GATHERING BREACHES

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let me start with this. The former Premier said that I need to qualify my statements, or make sure that if there is something false said to spend time fixing it and correcting the record. Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. If I spent my day responding to every fake-news article, every fake story or every fake meme or every random forward riddled with inaccuracies, I would never get any work done for the people whom we serve, Mr. Speaker. I just would not. And so I accept the position where it is coming from. But, you know, it is not okay in my view for someone who held the highest office of the land to put himself to that low level of politics.

Revolve is not being investigated for social distancing. As the Minister of National Security says, there is a question of illegal raft-up. Also, the Honourable Members should know, as I tried—

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motives]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Premier is imputing improper motives when he speaks of me going to low-level politics. I simply asked him to qualify. That is not “low-level politics.” That is calling all of us to a higher level, to qualify what we say.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Thank you. Your point is made.

Premier, just be mindful of his point. Continue on.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I tried to remind the former Premier, rules exist in Bermuda. One month ago on May 18, the Minister of Health, which is clear to read on the Government’s website, updated guidance for persons in Bermuda. And it says, “Mask wearing Indoors—Masks are not required when gathering with other immunised persons . . . Mask wearing Outdoors—Masks are not required *except* in certain crowded and high-risk settings or venues.” That is important! That is what we have to recognise and understand, Mr. Speaker.

Should I take this House to the level of the social media stuff and record the Webex and see the three Opposition Members sitting in that small room with no windows, and create a meme and say they are not social distancing and they are not obeying the law? Come on, Mr. Speaker. We can do better here. And so I am going to move on from this because I do not think that it is helpful for the debate of which we are engaged in to go on, you know, this whole social media stuff.

But here is what I am going to tell you, Mr. Speaker. On April 25, I gave an address entitled Bermuda Beyond the Pandemic.

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading and imputing improper motive]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member again is imputing improper motive and misleading the public here. If the Premier is seen to be not social dis-

tancing, but yet he is asking for the public to social distance, then he should qualify why he is not social distancing. That is all we are asking for—those controversies between what we see him doing and what he is saying.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Otherwise, it is the boat that everyone had among SafeKey.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Again, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take the time—

The Speaker: Note his concern. Be mindful of your comments.

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely. I am not going to take the time, because here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. I gave an address that was entitled Moving Bermuda Beyond the Pandemic. And over the past 15 months, I have had people close to me die from the virus. We have listened and seen Bermudians on the street, talked to them on the phone, read concerns in emails, messages on social media, each message, each word, the story of hardship, and all of these things impacting people, Mr. Speaker.

One particular call I will never forget was with one Ms. Michelle Barnett (Mr. Speaker, you may know) on Facetime over a year ago. She told me how she lay in her hospital bed battling the coronavirus and fighting for her life. Forty-one days was the amount of time that she spent on a ventilator to keep her alive. And through the grace of God, Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that she was able to share her story with the public. However, Mr. Speaker, 33 Bermudians are not around to share their stories. Those 33 Bermudians who were loved and cherished by their family and their friends are now gone due to this deadly disease—33 more than any of us would have wanted to lose.

And each time there is a new death, the Minister of Health and I have to acknowledge it either in a press conference, et cetera. And it is really hard because, Mr. Speaker, given the privacy [rules], we do not know who these people are. And for us they are just numbers and names. But they are real persons and real families.

So one of the difficult challenges that we face is what to do to protect those who are in our care when it may mean making unpopular decisions. And over the past 16 months we have had to make many difficult and unpopular decisions. Unpopular? Some that I do not even like myself, Mr. Speaker. But each decision has to be made as we uphold our duty as

leaders in this country to protect the people of this Island that we love.

So each and every decision, Mr. Speaker, is deliberated over long hours in Cabinet, debated in my office, on virtual calls, telephone, WhatsApp, caucus meetings, early hours. The other day, Mr. Speaker, I went to bed at 4:00 am. That is normal. That is the work of which we do. Mr. Speaker, I am exhausted. The Ministers are exhausted. MPs are exhausted. Health care workers are exhausted. And I want the people who are listening today to know that there are no decisions that have been made lightly or without the care and due consideration of the impact that that decision will have.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind honourable colleagues that when the Bermudian people went to the polls on October 1, Mr. Speaker, they made it clear that they were voting for strong leadership. And leadership cannot shy away from making the difficult decisions, in order to keep some people happy while putting all of the people in danger. This Government cannot—cannot—ignore its duty in order to make sure that we protect our popularity. That is not what leadership is. It means standing strong and knowing that decisions that you make, while they may not be popular, are the right ones.

And when you are battling a deadly virus, we have to make sure that those decisions are not arbitrary, but are founded in science, medical expertise and are risk-based. It is important that we recognise and understand that, Mr. Speaker. Because what I know, Mr. Speaker, is that we are all committed, every one of us—and I believe that. All 36 of us are committed. We are never going to get 36 people to agree [on everything]. We are never going to get, you know, the 29 people who sit in my caucus to agree on everything. But what we want to make sure that we do is to protect people and make sure that we keep them safe.

And many people have said that there is no playbook. Well, a once-in-a-century pandemic, I could not pick up the phone and say, *Dame Jennifer, Dr. Brown, please, how did you handle the pandemic when you had it? Give me some advice, give me some pointers.* It is not there! It is not. And what we have to recognise is that a variant is just a plane-flight away. This stuff is not easy. So, Mr. Speaker, I understand and recognise the angst inside of the community. But I also recognise and remember that we laid out the strategy as a government to move Bermuda beyond the pandemic.

Because what I do not want, Mr. Speaker, and I actually do believe this. Globally, when the US is seeing a decline in cases, and we see the UK was seeing a decline in cases, and now we are beginning to see them go back up because they have the new variants, and you know the same thing may happen in the United States and other places, there are some countries, Mr. Speaker, which have not had that expe-

rience. They have not been affected by third and fourth waves. I want that to be us. I want that last wave to be our *last* wave. That is why we laid out this strategy, Moving Bermuda Beyond the Pandemic.

Because I know more than everything, and I said this in a national address, Mr. Speaker, whether you are on the pro-vaccine side, whether you do not believe that people should have the vaccine, whether you are on the opening side, whether you are on the closing side or all the rest, we all want to talk about something else [other] than COVID-19. We all want to get back to doing other stuff. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have to do what is necessary to make sure that we get past there. Vital and important.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have heard a few things today. And I can celebrate the fact that we have gotten to the point where we are able to remove just about every single restriction inside of this country and to give those tireless unsung heroes throughout this battle, our frontline workers, our health care workers, these people, people at the borders, customs officers [a break]. We can name them, the ones who are working day in and day out to help this country during this pandemic. They are finally getting a break, Mr. Speaker. And we are there now. Here is the thing, Mr. Speaker.

We were also there in February. And then a new variant [which] was transmissible—40 per cent more transmissible than the original virus—set us back. Only a fool does not learn, Mr. Speaker. And I promise you this Government is learning. We now have a country where on Sunday we are dropping our mask mandates. And like the Minister of Education stated, prevention is better than cure.

So now, Mr. Speaker, let me take a few minutes to address the elephant in the room—supervised quarantine. Right now we have very little virus circulating in Bermuda. And I want to keep it that way. The only way that we can keep deadly variants out is to make sure that we are protecting our borders. The newest one, Mr. Speaker, is the Delta variant, raging in India. The UK reported less than 4,000 new cases and, more importantly, zero deaths for the first time in over a year, in June. And over the past two weeks the Delta variant has continued to spread, and it is now the dominant variant in the United Kingdom, accounting for 90 per cent of new cases. This morning they reported over 11,000 new cases, which is a four-month high! They also reported 20 new deaths.

We have to be on guard regarding variants, Mr. Speaker. We have flights which are coming from the United Kingdom. We need to know and need to make sure that we have as much protection as possible to make sure that we do not see an outbreak of those variants here. The Delta is just one. There are many, many, many, many.

So I am not going to pretend this policy has not been controversial, Mr. Speaker; it has. And I just want to make sure that I reiterate points that were

made earlier. We tried quarantine at home before. It did not work. And I know there are concerns about costs. But we also have to compare those to the cost of lives saved, the students staying in school, businesses not having to close or lay off workers. And the cost of making sure that we can remain open. That is priceless. And we cannot put a price on Bermudian lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, leadership means standing strong, knowing that the choices that you are making are those that are saving lives and are founded and based in science and are risk-based and properly calibrated. But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. We were elected to serve the community. And I want the people in this country who are listening to know that their voices and their cries do not fall on deaf ears. Whether it is Facebook or WhatsApp or Twitter, it is important to know that in Bermuda we have a strong democracy. And as we work to improve this policy, as has been alluded to by some of my Members who spoke today, there have been passionate debates internally in our own PLP caucus about this policy. And I accept some of the principle stances which have been taken by Members.

So I just want to take a few minutes to clear up some facts, Mr. Speaker. Number one, we will not stop Bermudians from returning home, and I want to be clear on that. Our Attorney General knows the Constitution, and we know how stories and responses may be able to be manipulated. Those who are not immunised will need to stay in supervised quarantine. But we cannot legally, and we will not legally, deny Bermudians the right to return home.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, we need to make the price more affordable for Bermudians. There are memes flying around with false prices. But even the lowest price, around \$2,500 at the Fairmont Southampton, including food, that is still very high. And we are working to make this better and how to reduce costs. Because I get it. It is a lot for families. It is a lot for families who have saved up, who want to take that trip.

Our policy, Mr. Speaker, was to get to community protection, and we are not there. But, Mr. Speaker, as we cross 60 per cent fully immunised, and the 65 per cent fully immunised, and the 70 per cent fully immunised in our population, quarantine times will shorten and there will be options to quarantine at home. But sadly, Mr. Speaker, we are not there yet. And just having come out of an outbreak, we need to make sure that we use a risk-based approach, and we need to make *sure* that we are moving along in a way that we do not have to snap back.

As the Minister of Health said, Mr. Speaker, this policy will not last forever. It will not. But we have judged that the need to ensure that our Island can function and thrive culturally, socially and economically must be matched with strict controls at our borders.

It is not easy, Mr. Speaker. And if we need to adjust further, we will adjust further.

But here is what I will say as well, Mr. Speaker. Some of my Members have alluded to it, in addition to Members of the Opposition. We have not been perfect in this. Our communication has not been perfect. And it is incumbent upon leaders to hear when people are saying, *We need you to do a little better*. There have been a number of questions, some false starts and some changes. These have caused confusion and angst. And they do fall below the mark of what is needed. We as Government have accepted them and have apologised. I am not going to make excuses, Mr. Speaker, because the buck stops with me. And we all need to ensure that the team does better.

But that does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that this Government has not been busting our tails. Because we have—Ministers, MPs, Senators, public officers, persons who are on the frontline. We laid out a plan to move beyond the pandemic. We laid out a strategy, and we have executed on that strategy, Mr. Speaker, over the past three months. And it is important to note that you cannot have one without the other. We said that we are going to increase our protection on our border while relaxing restrictions in this country, and that is what we have done.

And it is vital that we execute our strategy, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because we need to focus on what we are elected to do. Affordable housing, education reform, reducing interest rates, cutting the cost of living, protecting our environment, the issues that matter to the people of these lives who are not debating raft-ups and vaccines and Bill Gates and everything else, Mr. Speaker; that is a distraction to what we actually need to do.

NATIONAL HEROES DAY 2020/21

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, as I close, this weekend we celebrate our National Heroes. And fittingly, we also celebrate our fathers. And to many the words “father” and “heroes” certainly go hand in hand. Through the last 15 months, Mr. Speaker, fathers, like mothers and so many people in our community, have remained resolute. They have guided their families through the most trying times in a generation. And I know, Mr. Speaker, myself as a father how difficult it can be to balance the demands of a job, the demands and the need to provide for your family, the need to provide love, time and attention. Being a father is certainly a balancing act between being present for hugs and quality time while also being on the job to put food on the table.

FATHER'S DAY

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, this weekend we honour the fathers of Bermuda and all that they

do. We also honour the heroes of Bermuda's past and the unsung heroes of Bermuda's present. You know, Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit upset that we will not have the traditional things which we may [usually] have over this weekend. What I can say is, Mr. Speaker, that we are the great country that we are today because of those who helped lay the foundations of our great democracy and our proud Bermudian culture. And those heroes of today are on the frontlines—

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: You hear the alarm.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you for your 20 minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: And, Mr. Speaker, I am happy that we have all worked to move Bermuda beyond the pandemic. So, happy and safe holiday weekend, Bermuda. Happy National Heroes Day. Mr. Speaker, a very happy Father's Day to you and all of the fathers in this Honourable House and the fathers of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

And as we close this evening, I would just like to add to that by wishing happy Father's Day to not only those in our Chambers, those Members, but to all fathers of Bermuda. Enjoy your Father's Day. Be safe and spend time with your families.

Members, we will see you in two weeks on the 2nd of July. With that, the House stands adjourned.

[At 7:30 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 2 July 2021.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
2 JULY 2021
10:01 AM***Sitting Number 21 of the 2020/2021 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. The House is now in session. Ms. Beale will lead us in prayer.
Ms. Beale.

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]*

The Speaker: Thank you.
Members, the House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES*[Minutes of 18 June 2021]*

The Speaker: The Minutes of the 18th of June have been circulated.

Are there any amendments, corrections that are required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

*[Minutes of 18 June 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING****BERMUDA OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

The Speaker: I would just like to announce that I have received the Bermuda Ombudsman Annual Report 2020. This report has been submitted in compliance with section 24(1) and 24(3) of the Ombudsman Act 2004. That is the only announcement this morning from the Speaker.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There are none.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: There are some seven Statements this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

**MOVING BERMUDA'S TOURISM
BEYOND THE PANDEMIC**

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

Mr. Speaker, if we were ever in any doubt as to the importance of tourism to this economy, the pandemic has shown just how critical tourism jobs are and the importance of economic activity created by tourism to Bermuda. In the National Economic Report tabled in this Honourable House as part of this year's debate on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the Honourable Member, the Minister of Finance, set out a stark review of 2020's economy generally and of the tourism economy in particular.

Mr. Speaker, a virtual global lockdown stopped tourism dead in its tracks. In Bermuda between March 21, 2020 and June 30, 2020 there were no commercial flights as the Government made the determination to protect our borders at a time when vaccines were not yet available. The result of this global shock for Bermuda was jarring and saw total air visitors drop 84.4 per cent when compared to 2019. This was compounded by a 98.3 per cent decrease in cruise visitors. This correlated with an 88.7 per cent decrease in cruise and air leisure visitor spending compared with the same period.

Mr. Speaker, once we reopened our borders to scheduled commercial flights, the move towards growth began but has been hindered by outbreaks and varying progress in overseas vaccination programmes. I think it important to note, and in this regard, Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the National Economic Report: “Bermuda’s traveller arrival process of aggressive COVID-19 testing, perhaps the most rigorous in the world, was a critical factor in consumer decision making. It was the number one reason consumers chose Bermuda in the second half of [2020] . . . In exit surveys, 98 percent of travellers said they felt ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ from COVID-19 while in Bermuda between July and December 2020.”

Mr. Speaker, since those days much has been rebuilt and visitor confidence in Bermuda remains high. That confidence saw us chosen to host certain events whose original locations could not deliver the safe experience that is now embedded in traveller decision-making. But the challenge remains before us. The National Economic Report recorded a 22.5 per cent decrease in employment in the accommodation and food service sectors in the calendar year 2020. Those jobs are slowly returning, and with the opening of the new St. Regis Hotel & Resort some growth is now occurring.

[Tourism Beyond the Pandemic](#). Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Tourism Authority [the Authority] has taken on board a new CEO in the person of Mr. Charles Jeffers II, who brings a wealth of experience to the post and has been [tasked] from the beginning managing through our last outbreak. He follows in the shoes of Glenn Jones, who provided a professional and dedicated hand to guide the organisation during an unprecedented period. Both Mr. Jeffers and the Authority’s board, chaired by the Honourable Member for constituency 14, are keenly aware of the opportunity presented by this period in global tourism. As the Minister responsible, I have commended to them a vision for moving Bermuda’s tourism beyond the pandemic, and we are determined to work together to realise the potential represented by this period and by Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, there is cause for optimism. Some of the metrics tracked by the Bermuda Tourism Authority indicate pockets of growth and demonstrate a resilience in the market upon which Bermuda can capitalise. For the first five months of this year hotel occupancy is up almost 20 per cent from 2020 levels, and the average length of the leisure visitor’s stay is approaching 14 days, more than double the pre-pandemic average. Superyacht calls have increased by 62 per cent year over year with a commensurate increase in economic impact.

Mr. Speaker, our air capacity is also increasing, and the likelihood is that when compared with 2019 we will realise the return of almost 50 per cent of the capacity achieved in that year. Mr. Speaker, the reduced [air] capacity in 2020, some 170,000 seats,

has been steadily increasing for 2021, and I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that 2021’s current schedule indicates a seat capacity of over 300,000 to serve Bermuda. This is complemented by an increase in leisure air visitors year over year. We have already exceeded the level met last year, which saw only 13,617 leisure air visitors, while at June 30 we are at over 15,000 leisure [air] visitors.

1) Homeporting and new cruise opportunities: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members would have seen the fruits of the labour of the Honourable Member, the Minister of Transport, as the Viking cruise ship *Orion* sails in and out of Bermuda’s ports throughout the week. With a rigorous testing protocol and a pool of vaccinated crew and passengers, this ship represents not only a welcome boost to the local sectors that depend on such sailings, but signals a concept which can accrue to the benefit of Bermuda in the future. Other cruise lines have expressed interest in homeporting from Bermuda, and in those discussions the Minister has set out Bermuda’s requirements. I am confident that we will see additional homeporting in the future.

2) Superyachts: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that I had the opportunity to execute a memorandum of understanding [MOU] with Florida’s Fort Lauderdale in Broward County in March of this year. That MOU is a two-year partnership to entice vessels leaving one destination to head to the other. This collaborative marketing agreement must be exploited to Bermuda’s benefit, and it provides the ideal complement to the legislation passed in this Honourable House in July 2019 on the issue of superyachts. Mr. Speaker, we have two critical elements required to attract more superyachts, and my ask of the Bermuda Tourism Authority is that we press the advantage that we have in this area to Bermuda’s benefit.

3) Bermudiana Beach: On to the issue of Bermudiana Beach, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that work will soon start at the site known as the Bermudiana Beach. Following the announcement of a tranche of \$10 million, supported by a sovereign guarantee, pledged to proceed with the necessary development at this property, due diligence has now been completed, the development loan approved and work on the additional elements of the project will soon commence.

Mr. Speaker, these works include additional rooms and a series of guest amenities, which when completed will make it suitable for paying guests, representing the newest addition to the tourism stock of guest accommodation. The plan is to complete construction by April 2022 and be open shortly thereafter. Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting development as the site presents a boost to the local Warwick community, it provides jobs in construction and also provides an additional family-style choice for visitors to the Island.

4) Diversifying the product: Mr. Speaker, in regard to diversifying the product, all of the good work of presenting Bermuda as a safe destination, the opening of the St. Regis and the new construction at Bermudiana Beach must be accompanied by a diversified on-Island product that promotes the lifestyle option that seals the deal with increasingly discerning travellers.

Mr. Speaker, the next phase of product development will be led by a clearly defined events strategy that includes the worlds of film, fashion, food and art. The pent-up demand for leisure travel is forcing destinations to distinguish themselves in the crowded marketplace. I am confident that the Board of the Bermuda Tourism Authority understands this strategy and the Authority will work to augment our product development.

5) Bermudians in the industry: Finally, Bermudians in the industry. Mr. Speaker, there continues to be a place for Bermudians in the tourism industry. More than the hospitality aspect of the career, the growth slated to occur in the industry makes it ideal for Bermudians to enter and be able to meet their social responsibilities through the salaries and wages to be earned. We must do more than appeal to some innate sense of politeness or desire to do well.

Bermudians, and young Bermudians in particular, make sound value judgments in career choices and do so on the basis of how they will best sustain their families and themselves. That is what we must promote: that a tourism career will allow you to feed your family, pay your bills, educate your children and meet your basic needs of accommodation and health care.

Mr. Speaker, a core group of hotel owners meet regularly with the Bermuda Tourism Authority and public service technical officers. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that this very issue is a regular feature of their discussions and will shortly yield a working group dedicated to promoting tourism careers to Bermudians. This is especially important with the redevelopment of the Fairmont Southampton pending and the positions that will need to be filled once that site is again operational.

Mr. Speaker, on the heels of the Honourable Member, the Labour Minister's public appeal for Bermudians to join the hospitality workforce, I take this opportunity to remind the public that the Department of Workforce Development provides funding to support Bermudian families who apply for the Culinary Arts [Associate] programmes at the Bermuda College, as well as for those persons who apply for overseas funding in culinary arts/hospitality programmes in the US, the United Kingdom and Canada. In addition, the department provides internships and employment opportunities to Bermudians in partnership with the restaurant and hospitality sectors.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the global tourism industry has not had an easy time these last 16

months. The local tourism industry, beset by challenges of static air arrivals, met a perfect storm of damaging factors with the advent of the pandemic.

But emerging from this time is a unique once-in-a-generation opportunity that matches the counter-narrative of the same challenge presented by COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, there are choices to be made. COVID-19 has not just changed how we interact, but it has changed how we travel. It has challenged destinations to make themselves relevant to the time and [has] given a lifeline to those places that may not have been persuaded as to the need for this shift. I am confident in Bermuda's prospects. We have laid the groundwork for tourism beyond the pandemic, and spurred on by tough decisions taken to keep Bermuda safe the Government is determined to lead in the making of those decisions needed to make Bermuda the destination of choice for tourism beyond the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

The next Statement on the Order Paper this morning is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you, Honourable Members and the listening public.

The Speaker: Good morning, and you can go ahead.

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING ACT 2021

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, later today I will table the Bill entitled the [Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021](#), which seeks to amend the Development and Planning Act 1974 to (1) increase the protections to the environment; while (2) streamlining the planning process.

Mr. Speaker, I must reiterate the Government's commitment to introduce sustainable planning legislation which will protect our delicate environment while streamlining the measures to stimulate our economy, particularly our construction industry. Mr. Speaker, our statistics underscore that our construction industry is doing quite well, and we understand the critical role of the Department of Planning in facilitating new investment and meeting the development needs of the Island. As a result, we are committed to improving the efficiency of all of the department's procedures.

Mr. Speaker, the figures of the [first] six months of this year show that the number of permits [issued] has increased by 7 per cent versus 2019, and by 44 per cent versus 2020. A similar increase in inspections completed (47 per cent versus 2020) is also apparent. However, the most exciting news is that

commencement inspections, which give an indication of new projects starting and therefore the prospect of increased and sustained work for the construction industry, have increased by 72 per cent, well in excess of the increase in permits. This shows that projects which may have previously been on hold are now being acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initial steps that have already been implemented in order to achieve the improvements, such as (a) engaging with key stakeholders from the construction industry to understand first-hand their range of concerns. Through this dialogue, the Department of Planning has been able to discuss proposed changes and obtain valuable feedback; (b) scheduling of quarterly planning clinics that allows the public to interact directly with Department of Planning officers; (c) introducing delegated powers that provide the director [the ability] to approve applications administratively; (d) sending alerts to anyone who registers on the planning website when new applications are gazetted; and (e) implementing the Energov system that provides for electronic submissions, review of applications and submissions of objections, thus eliminating the need for paper submissions.

In addition, there are a range of other initiatives that are also being actively worked on. These include the Competent Persons Scheme, new procedures to allow minor revisions to be approved in the field during construction, revisions to the General Development Order to increase the scope of what is deemed as *permitted development* and the introduction of new local development plans commencing with the soon-to-be-announced draft North East Hamilton Plan 2021.

However, we have achieved these measures while ensuring that we protect our precious environmental assets. This was reflected in the Bermuda Plan 2018.

Mr. Speaker, these other initiatives aside, the amendment being tabled today focuses on three key areas:

1. Protected Conservation Areas
2. Special Development Orders
3. Emergency Development Orders

Mr. Speaker, the Bill will also introduce a concept of *protected conservation areas*. The aim of this amendment seeks to offer heightened protections with respect to this specially protected class upon which it is believed development should not be considered. A list of areas falling within the protected class shall be referenced in the amended Act. Such areas (which is subject to landowner agreement) may include the following:

- nature reserves;
- actively cultivated arable land;
- significant portions of wooded land;
- areas supporting valuable historic and cultural [assets].

Mr. Speaker, some have asked why this amendment is important. They have claimed that there is adequate protection in zoning of the land. Whilst it is true that the development plan process involves establishing zoning for land, these zonings are subject to change either by the development plan process itself or via approvals for development granted on appeal to the Minister. This amendment will ensure that these areas, once protected, can only be removed by the Legislature via affirmative resolution procedure.

Mr. Speaker, through the stakeholder engagement with the development industry, concerns have been expressed over the process of issuing or amending Special Development Orders (SDOs as we commonly know them). Therefore, this amendment seeks to revise the current process to support greater efficiency while maintaining rigorous standards.

Mr. Speaker, currently when SDOs are introduced or amended, the Minister must wait until the House sits to table an SDO. This requirement can cause significant delay which typically equates to economic ramifications that can undermine the viability of a development. An example that highlights this challenge is the introduction of the 2018 amendment to the Tuckers Point SDO. The passing of the amendment by the Legislature determined whether interested buyers were successful in purchasing the lots of land. Given the scheduling of the House at the time, the tabling of amendments was delayed by three months, thereby resulting in a significant risk of losing potential buyers.

Mr. Speaker, we have not sacrificed the due diligence process to ensure that development proposals are appropriately assessed in terms of social, environmental and economic impact. In fact, Mr. Speaker, for the avoidance of any doubt, we have now legislated it. In keeping with the UK Convention on the Environment, adequate assessment and scrutiny must be performed before the SDO can be deemed acceptable and gazetted.

Therefore, the various checks and balances are incorporated into the Act before the SDO is approved and gazetted. These checks and balances will include the requirement for development proposals to be accompanied by an Environment Impact Statement (EIS), which must be published for public review and comment. These requirements will be prepared in the form of procedures to clearly outline the steps that must be followed in order for a development proposal to be supported for an SDO.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment further provides for the Minister to activate, on declaration of a national emergency, procedures to allow the director to expedite the processing of a planning application and approve the application administratively to address a crisis situation, provided that any such decisions, while fast-tracked, must not contravene any legislative or policy directives such as building codes.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments to the Act form a key element of the streamlining measures initiative originally announced in May 2019 to bring greater efficiency to the Planning Department's processes and service delivery to the public, and ultimately to provide a conducive regulatory framework to support new investment while protecting our environmental assets.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this point?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to advise Honourable Members of the tabling today of the [Public Treasury \(Administration and Payments\) Amendment and Validation Act 2021](#). The amendments provide the Government with the legislative mechanism to set off funds owed arising from benefit payments against future payments to be made to individuals. The Act will also validate certain matters related to unemployment benefit payments effected during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how vulnerable and fragile our world is. The infection has challenged the way we socialise and has put the lives of the citizens of every country in great peril, while also creating significant financial and economic challenges. In approximately 18 months, the World Health Organization [WHO] estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic had infected somewhere around 182 million individuals and killed almost 4 million people. The total cost to countries and their people has reached unprecedented levels. It is arguably the worst pandemic in history, especially from a health, financial and socio-economic standpoint.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that we all have been affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, the impact of the pandemic and its consequences has been felt differently, depending on each person's personal circumstances. For some people, in addition to dealing with actual or potential health challenges, they have had to struggle to even take care of their basic needs due to no or significantly reduced income.

Mr. Speaker, in most developed nations they typically have some form of an unemployment insur-

ance that helps to support workers who become unemployed and meet certain criteria. Normally, these unemployment insurance programmes are funded by either employee/employer contributions or some form of a tax. However, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has never had such a programme.

Mr. Speaker, when the need arose to protect the health and lives of Bermuda residents by shutting our borders and limiting people's movements throughout the country, this resulted in a large number of vulnerable persons who desperately needed financial help. These persons suddenly found themselves out of work and unable to determine how they would be able to pay their rent and feed themselves and their families. Mr. Speaker, this was an unprecedented and very serious situation, which understandably generated high levels of anxiety within our community.

The Government immediately realised that we must ensure that the most vulnerable were assisted, and that time was of the essence. Therefore, in short order we designed a temporary programme that became known as the Unemployment Benefit (or UEB) scheme. The Unemployment Benefit scheme provided financial assistance to persons who were laid off, terminated or had their income significantly reduced as a result of restrictions imposed to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Such persons were paid up to a maximum of \$500 per week.

Mr. Speaker, the demand for the UEB was overwhelming and substantial. Over 10,000 people applied to receive support for their financial predicament on an expedited and emergency basis. Because of the critical nature of ensuring that funding was provided to these vulnerable persons on a timely basis, there were instances in which there was insufficient time for UEB applications to be completed within the full review and approval process prior to making payments (in accordance with the UEB Regulations).

Thus, there were occasions where payments were expeditiously made without prior approval by the Director of the Department of Workforce Development and by the Permanent Secretary of Labour. There is therefore a need to validate any such payment made under any of the UEB Regulations to an eligible person without prior approval, as required by the relevant UEB Regulations.

Mr. Speaker, there were also limited instances, due to extenuating circumstances, where a regulation was not appropriately extended or replaced on a timely basis. Thus, a few payments were made before the new or amended regulations were brought into force.

Mr. Speaker, I must however make it clear that while there were some processes that were not properly followed due to the unprecedented and life-altering challenges we were facing, there were other processes that were developed and implemented to ensure that there were still *checks and balances* and an effective audit trail. Thus, there was adequate in-

formation on the payees and the appropriate linkages to the accounts where payments were made to allow for appropriate review. It is important to also note that once the vast numbers of applications were processed to a manageable level, further checks and adjustments were carried out.

Mr. Speaker, to limit the financial impact to those in need during this trying time, during the initial phase of UEB persons continued to be paid until they advised that they had returned to work. Unfortunately, this led to some overpayments, as persons did not always provide the required notification accurately or on a timely basis. Some of these funds have subsequently been recovered. It is the Government's intention to pursue, in a methodical and fair manner, the recovery of all outstanding overpaid amounts directly from respective recipients.

Mr. Speaker, under the current provisions the government's only legal recourse is through the courts. The amendments to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act will allow provisions relating to "set-off" (the netting of funds payment payable to a recipient by the government against what the recipient owed to the government) to be extended to benefits payments. Mr. Speaker, this set-off mechanism in place will allow for more efficient recovery of funds. Once the provision is in place, the government will be reaching out to individuals to recover funds that have not yet been returned.

Mr. Speaker, the over-payments and the need to validate certain actions may on the face of the matter seem somewhat alarming. However, this crisis required the well-being of Bermuda residents to be given the highest priority. We made the necessary decisions to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society had funding for the basic necessities of life and to keep them and their families out of extreme poverty during a time of unprecedented hardship.

It was a time when saving lives had to take precedence over rigid adherence to rules, for the greater good. Notwithstanding the fact that we now need to take these steps, it is our strong belief that this was the right and humane thing to do for our people, given the devastating circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

2021 SENIOR SCHOOL GRADUATIONS

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this week Monday and Wednesday, June 28 and 30, respectively, I had the pleasure of attending both the [Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy graduations](#). While the pandemic may have changed the location of these events from years past, I can say without question that all felt the spirit of accomplishment, joy and pride. It is a feeling that I carry with me today as I share with this Honourable House and the Bermuda public the accomplishments of our 2021 graduating class.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is safe to say that no other graduating-year group has been through as much as the Class of 2021. Two academic years interrupted with pandemic and the pandemic-related changes are without question stressful. Yet we were able to see 139 students graduate from the Berkeley Institute and 91 from CedarBridge Academy. These students knew and appreciated the importance of their education and let nothing get in the way, despite the unpredictability of the times.

Mr. Speaker, our students' achievements are a testament to their tenacity, resilience, and perseverance. I have heard from several students who truly did feel like giving up. They were facing educational stresses from remote learning to uncertainty over whether their school building would reopen. They also faced stressors at home as their parents faced uncertainty with work. I commend them for finding the strength within themselves and pushing through even when they did not feel like they could. Despite the times, our BPSS [Bermuda Public School System] senior students completed amazing feats. Please indulge me as I speak to their great accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, at Berkeley Institute's graduation the guest speaker was Berkeley alum, Ms. Dominique Richardson, a senior underwriter at the insurance firm, Markel Bermuda. Ms. Richardson delivered a message to students congratulating them for their perseverance in the face of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. She encouraged them to fully recognise and appreciate what they have overcome and celebrate the fact that (and I quote), "You guys did it—you made it. Period."

Mr. Speaker, having satisfied the criteria set by the Department of Education for graduation from the Bermuda Public School System at the Berkeley Institute, there were a total of 139 graduates, as follows:

- There were 123 graduates who graduated with the Bermuda School Diploma (BSD).
- Four students received the Bermuda School Certificate (BSC).
- Five students graduated with the Bermuda Alternate School Diploma (BASD) from the Functional Academics programme.

- Four students graduated with the Penn Foster High School Diploma.
- Three graduated from the first cohort of students with autism.

Mr. Speaker, of these graduates, seven students were awarded advanced honours, summa cum laude. Five students were awarded advanced honours, magna cum laude. Four students achieved advanced honours, cum laude.

Mr. Speaker, [at Bermuda College],

- Seven students graduated from Bermuda College with associate degrees, of which two were awarded the Distinguished Dean's Award by the Bermuda College.
- Five students graduated from the Bermuda College with Applied Technology Certificates, of which one graduated with distinction and received the award for Most Outstanding Applied Science Technology Graduate.
- Three students graduated with their Nursing Assistant Certifications.
- Seven others are set to complete their various certifications by August 2021.

Mr. Speaker, 11 graduates received a collective total of \$3,500 in Berkeley Panther Pride Award scholarships; 22 students received scholarships and awards at Berkeley's fourth annual Scholarships and Awards Ceremony, totalling approximately \$60,000. Additionally, students received numerous scholarships from the private sector and university admission scholarships totalling approximately \$280,000 to date.

Mr. Speaker, at CedarBridge Academy's graduation Ms. Thoslae Williams, a graduate from the CedarBridge [Academy] Class of 2011, was the guest speaker. Ms. Williams delivered a powerful and passionate call to graduates, encouraging them to dare to be different. She also pointed out to the graduates that their ending does not have to be the same as their beginning—if they put in the hard work, they will achieve their goals. She closed her remarks by reminding graduates to always work hard, be resilient and be positive thinkers.

Mr. Speaker, having satisfied the criteria set by the Department of Education for graduation from the Bermuda Public School System at CedarBridge Academy, there were a total of 91 graduates, as follows:

- There were 79 who graduated with the Bermuda School Diploma [BSD].
- Nine [students] graduated with the Bermuda Alternative School Diploma [BASD] from the Functional Academics programme.
- Two students graduated with a Bermuda Functional Skills Certificate (BFSC).
- One student graduated with the Penn Foster High School Diploma.
- Three students graduated with [BSD] honours distinction.

- Five students graduated with [BSD] honours. Mr. Speaker, [furthermore],
- One student graduated from Bermuda College with an Associate Degree.
- Three [students] graduated from Bermuda College with a Certificate in Applied Technology.
- Two students graduated with the Nursing Assistants Certificate from Bermuda College.
- Most of our graduates will be attending the Bermuda College in the fall, and others will be attending overseas colleges and universities.

Mr. Speaker, graduates at CedarBridge Academy earned scholarships and awards in approximately the amount of \$37,000 in addition to internships and apprenticeships. At this time, I would like to thank our community partners, who have continued to support us despite the financial challenges they have faced during this pandemic. Twenty students were recognised for earning the NCCER [National Center for Construction Education and Research] Core Certificate in the area of technical education.

Mr. Speaker, we know through research evidence and anecdotal stories no student reaches this milestone alone. The Ministry and Department of Education staff, school boards, principals, teachers, support staff, parents and guardians, students, volunteers and the community partners all helped our students reach this milestone. Whether it be knowledge, encouraging words, donations, time or motivating incentives, our public school students have a village around them. I want to thank the village that has supported the graduating classes of 2021, and their achievements are your achievements as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education has embarked on the most ambitious but also necessary journey of education reform. We know that as times have changed, we must [change] how we educate our children. They must be prepared for the jobs of the future. It is for their future that we work so hard. By preparing our students for the future world of work, the Government's vision for the Bermuda Public School System to see all students educated to lead personally and professionally, compete locally and contribute globally will be realised. This vision guides our decisions and forward progress that we may ensure the graduating classes to come are even more successful than the last.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is dedicated to ensuring the success of every child in Bermuda, for we know that their success equals the success of our Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, I believe you have a second Statement. Would you like to present that now?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And I am sure this one pleases you as well.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

SUMMER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATORS

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to share with my honourable colleagues and the community at large the summer professional learning activities that the [Department of Education has planned for educators](#) during the months of July and August.

Mr. Speaker, an excerpt from a report on professional learning released by the OECD [the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development], states that “Effective teaching is at the heart of a successful education system and there is a growing recognition that supporting teachers’ professional learning from the beginning to the end of their career [is critical to] improve student outcomes.” Teachers’ professional learning enables them to develop the knowledge, skills and practices necessary to be effective educators, support their peers, contribute to the collective improvement of the profession, and gain the trust, status and self-efficacy to carry out their work with a high degree of professionalism.

Mr. Speaker, teacher quality is at the core of student learning, and this is supported by research that consistently highlights that the quality of teaching is a key determinant of the variation in student achievement. Research also affirms that engaging teachers in high quality professional learning is the most successful way to improve teacher effectiveness and, by extension, improve student outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, this summer, like many teachers around the world, our teachers and educators in the Bermuda Public School System will take time during their summer vacation to participate in a variety of professional learning activities of their choosing in an effort to deepen their learning and expand their skills. The Department of Education will be funding targeted professional learning activities for teachers, which are focused on three areas of 21st century learning: (1) the Creative Curriculum; (2) Project Based Learning; and (3) Blended Learning.

Mr. Speaker, some of our P1 teachers have expressed an interest in piloting the Creative Curriculum for Kindergarten. These teachers will have access to independent learning around teaching the whole child within their zone of learning and development. They will be learning more about using a personalised learning approach for students that integrates content and developmental domains around project based learning, and this is aligned with our vision for learning for students.

The P1 teachers who participate in this summer professional learning activity will delve into foun-

dational areas such as social, emotional and physical development. They will learn to meet students where they are in language, literacy, mathematics and science, and be exposed to balancing intentional teaching with student-led learning. The concept of social science and the arts as integrated in all areas of Project Based Learning will be introduced. Here it is noted that the social science and the arts add to the cultural relevance of the learning experiences for children even while students learn about the world beyond Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the P1 teachers will be taking advantage of the opportunity to improve their teaching by being continuous learners themselves. This opportunity for summer professional learning will give them a jump-start on 21st century deeper learning for our young students through creating learning environments that support skills like critical thinking, collaboration and communication through exploration and inquiry learning.

Mr. Speaker, I will now share about the summer Project Based Learning activity. Plan 2022 Strategy 1.1 calls for teachers to deliver high quality instructional practices that are rigorous and foster knowledge comprehension, critical and creative thinking, application and communication. Project Based Learning is one of those high quality instructional practices. PBLWorks (a US institute for education that supports high instructional practices) states: “In Project Based Learning, teachers make learning come alive for students. Students work on a project over an extended period of time . . . that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question. [Students] demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience.

“As a result, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. Project Based Learning unleashes a contagious, creative energy among students and teachers.”

Mr. Speaker, additionally, the Project Based Learning Network states that “project based learning is a powerful way to engage students in rigorous, authentic learning. It will enable students to understand content at a deeper level and retain it for longer; get them excited about learning; engage them in solving real-world problems for real audiences; and to exercise their creativity by working collaboratively while mastering key learning targets.”

Mr. Speaker, during July and August, a group of 25 teachers and technical officers will participate in a six-week Project Based Learning Curriculum Developer Certification programme offered by the Project Based Learning Network. These officers and teachers will engage in a self-paced five-module programme focused on high-performance project based learning, how to dig deep to inform and inspire a rich project

based learning unit and how to frame a project based learning unit from start to finish.

Throughout the course our officers and teachers will have access to high-quality resources, one-on-one coaching and support from international coaches, and access to an international project based learning network community where they can share ideas, ask for feedback and get connected with resources. By the end of the course, officers and teachers will have to produce a project based learning unit that will be reviewed by local and international peers, and they will also publish that unit. They will be learning the same way students will learn—by working on an authentic project and sharing the final product with real audiences.

Mr. Speaker, lastly, I am pleased to report that another 30 teachers will participate in the Schoology Blended Learning Leader Academy this summer. The Schoology Blended Learning Leader Academy was developed to help transform teaching and learning. It is aligned with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards for Educators, and received the ISTE Proficiency Seal of Alignment. The Findings Report of the ISTE Seal of Alignment Review states: "The Schoology Blended Learning Professional Development is grounded in research-based strategies and collaboration to enable educators to master and apply new learning in their own educational context."

Mr. Speaker, Plan 2022 Strategy 1.1.3 calls for teachers to use innovative learning experiences that will ignite student engagement and motivate learning. Blended Learning will create this type of learning experience for our students, as it is a combination of face-to-face and online learning. The face-to-face time happens in the classroom where students have direct access to the teacher. The online learning can be done at school or at home. There is also the independent study time of which all can be combined differently. In-person learning happens during school hours, but the online learning could be a video to watch for homework, a lesson prepared by the teacher, use of online resources at school, some type of digital curriculum, or assignments and discussions carried out on a learning management system. The learning management system for the Bermuda Public School System is Schoology.

Mr. Speaker, in a blended learning setting students shift away from the traditional classroom and begin to focus on where and how technology can enhance learning. A project might be a multimedia presentation where students have to research and incorporate multiple sources. It might also include using social media to add to their background knowledge. With blended learning, the imagination is the only major limit to learning within the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, this Schoology Blended Learning [Leader] Academy includes nine sessions. Teachers will be introduced to the concept of blended learn-

ing; they will learn about how to communicate in a blended learning environment and how to facilitate a powerful community of learners online. There will also be sessions on asynchronous learning and collaboration, and how to drive instruction with digital assessments. They will experience what blended learning looks like in action and plan for flipped instruction, and design transformative lessons.

Mr. Speaker, all of these professional learning activities which I have shared will equip our teachers with 21st century knowledge and skills, and also empower and equip them to provide the best learning experiences for students.

In closing, let me say that education reform continues during the summer months as these groups of teachers *sharpen their saw* in preparation for 21st century learning and teaching.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour.

Minister Hayward, would you like to present your Statement now?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

IMMIGRATION REFORM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this Honourable House of the Government's plans for [immigration reform](#) which seek to modernise the country's immigration laws and supporting policies, and create operational efficiencies through process improvement. Immigration reform initiatives consist of the following strategic priorities:

1. achieve a simplified, fair and modern immigration legislative framework;
2. leverage technology to improve operations which will lead to greater levels of efficiency, process consistency and sustainability;
3. strengthen enforcement of laws and policies; and
4. support economic growth and the expansion of job opportunities in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, it is envisioned that these strategic priorities will provide the required restructuring to rebuild and strengthen our immigration system. The new system is also intended to allow this Government to provide the necessary protections and opportunities for current and future residents of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of the immigration reform is to ensure that the big picture is one [from which] all of Bermuda benefits. In the past we have discussed reforms to immigration in a very myopic way, such as work permits, permanent residency or the emotive and politically divisive issue of granting

status. Unfortunately, that dialogue has overshadowed the immediate need to overhaul and completely revise the laws, policies, systems and resources required to ensure that Bermuda has an immigration system that is unbiased and beneficial for today's Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, no matter which side of the political compass one sits on, there should be an honest and general acceptance that our current system simply is not efficient. Successive Government Administrations have failed to adequately invest time and capital in the reforms and resources required. Therefore, there should be a consensus that we need to achieve the strategic priorities of the Government's reform strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Strategic Priority 1—Achieve a simplified, fair, modern immigration legislative framework. Amongst other purposes, the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 (the Act) was enacted to provide Bermuda status to British subjects deemed to be domiciled in Bermuda under the Immigration Act 1937. There have been over 100 amendments to the Act since it came into operation. Some of those amendments have resulted in negative unintended consequences such as the creation of mixed-status families and the granting of status to individuals outside of the intent of the legislation. Up until 1989 provisions in the Act gave unreserved discretion to the Minister of the day. The Act is based on a construct and a way of thinking from a different era.

Mr. Speaker, over time many legal challenges have allowed the Act to be widely interpreted in conjunction with court rulings. Former Chief Justice Ian Kawaley once stated, "The 1956 Act is a classic instance of uniquely local legislation. Navigating through it often gives even the experienced judge or practitioner an unnerving sense of what it must be like to 'fly blind.'"

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will conduct a top-down review of the Act and associated policies. The aim will be to have an immigration legislative framework that is simplified, fair and modern. In the future, members of the public will not require a specialist immigration lawyer to understand immigration laws and policies.

Mr. Speaker, Strategic Priority 2—Leverage technology to improve operations leading to greater levels of efficiency and effectiveness, process and system consistency, and predictability and sustainability. Our current system is cumbersome, understaffed and supported by outdated IT systems that lack integration and inhibit the effective and efficient processing of all application types. The current state of most of the Immigration Department's IT systems is subpar. Bermuda is not getting value for money with the processes, procedures and systems currently in place.

Work has already been completed to map the existing workflows and to design re-engineered pro-

cesses. In addition, some implementation work has already occurred, with the most notable being the July 2020 launch of the new Border Management System and the December go-live of the E-gates at the L. F. Wade International Airport. However, more work must be done to ensure efficient operations. Employers and the public have long encouraged the improvements of process, turnaround times and quality in the department. Moving forward, the department will need to invest more to upgrade and replace antiquated systems and will look at innovative partnerships to achieve this goal. Work is also underway on the online submission of applications, online payment of fees, electronic workflow within the department and the distribution of digital application approvals.

Mr. Speaker, Strategic Priority 3—Strengthen enforcement of immigration laws and policies. As you would be aware, the Immigration Department's Compliance Section has the responsibility of enforcing the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 and its related policies. These duties include, but are not limited to, compliance checks of businesses, investigations of potential breaches to laws and policies, deportations and managing the Border Management System. The Compliance Section continues to perform its role with respect to investigations to a limited capacity.

However, in order to effectively carry out their mandate and strengthen the enforcement of immigration legislation and policies, the appropriate resources need to be sourced and [allotted] to ensure that Bermuda's immigration laws are adhered to and persons who break laws are held accountable. Additionally, a review of the current compliance framework needs to be analysed to determine if there is a need to increase the deterrents set out in our current laws.

Mr. Speaker, Strategic Priority 4—Support economic growth and the expansion of jobs in Bermuda. It should be noted that immigration has been used globally as a lever to develop societies by welcoming in the right people at the right time. In order to combat the realities of a declining and ageing population, we must achieve positive net immigration. That is, we need less emigration (or people leaving the country) and more immigration (or people returning to and entering the country to reside).

Mr. Speaker, the economic output from new residents contributes to the overall economy and is just one of the potential gains that could be achieved from a coherent immigration system designed to serve the needs of the Bermudian people and businesses. There are genuine concerns in the community about how non-Bermudians affect local culture and impact opportunities for Bermudians. Many jurisdictions have had to grapple with the very same concerns and recognised that there must be a balance, as the benefits of economically sound immigration policies which promote economic sustainability are clear.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident that we need a system that promotes and supports the growth of our lo-

cal residential population—a system that supports expansion and allows businesses to source the skilled labour it requires from the global workforce. To that end, the Ministry of Labour will continue its work to use immigration as a lever to support the local economy.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Ministry is steadfast in ensuring that the goal of immigration reform is one that all of Bermuda benefits [from]. As we progress towards achieving economic recovery, immigration policies will be a key component to achieving these outcomes. We should do better! We must do better! We have started on the work to achieve our strategic priorities, which is essential to transforming immigration. It is not simply *one* thing that must be done, but it is a combination of many coordinated actions that are required to fix a complex system and process. The Ministry of Labour has commenced the production of an Immigration Reform Strategic Plan centred on the four strategic priorities previously outlined, with achievable goals and *smart* objectives. The end result of the steps we are taking will lead to overall improvements in Bermuda's immigration system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The last Statement we have this morning is in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to sort out my video.

The Speaker: You had it on; it is going off again. There you go.

Continue.

SUMMER WATER SHORTAGE

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the state of the [government water supply](#) and distribution as we enter a period of high demand this summer. The Bermuda Weather Service indicates that rainfall in Bermuda for the last couple of months is below usual levels. The combined precipitation for May 2021 and June 2021 was 6.66 inches, with 3.76 inches falling in one day. Based on the normal average rainfall per month of 5 inches, the total for the last two months is 34 per cent below average. Simply put, the Island is currently in a dry spell.

As context, Mr. Speaker, the government water system provides piped water to approximately 2,000 households, businesses, the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital and the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute, and is also the safety net for two-thirds of Bermuda's households, being the principal supplier of trucked water on the Island. During dry spells or

drought times, some 40,000 Bermuda residents will rely on water trucks to meet their water needs. For the month of May, the Water and Sewage Section has sold 1.52 million imperial gallons to water truckers. For the same period last year, the section sold 1.36 million imperial gallons of water, [which indicates] some 160 extra truckloads over last year's demand.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 12 months the Water Section has made several improvements to the overall operation of the water systems to respond to peak demand, some of which include the following:

(1) The installation and commissioning of refurbished reverse osmosis water treatment systems at the Tudor Hill Water Treatment Plant in Southampton, increasing its output capacity by 25 per cent. This retrofit has improved the reliability of the plant as it is now a duty/standby system to mitigate possible failures at the site.

(2) The installation and commissioning of a refurbished reverse osmosis water treatment system at the Prospect Water Treatment Plant, Devonshire, increasing its output capacity by 60 per cent.

(3) Mr. Speaker, the continued expansion of a remote monitoring and control system for the central, western and eastern service areas capable of monitoring system status 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These data can be accessed directly on operations staff's mobile devices, which [access] facilitates early detection of distribution mains breakages, low or high tank levels, high flow alarms, and power and communications outages.

(4) As part of a trenching project with BELCO, approximately 10,000 feet of high-density polyethylene pipe [HDPE] has been installed so far this year. A total of 20,000 feet will be installed by end of this calendar year. This installation is in Harrington Sound Road and will also be expanded from Middle Road to Flatts. Some of this is for future expansion, and some is to replace old pipe infrastructure that has passed its useful life and is a source of water losses.

(5) Mr. Speaker, replacement of the Ministry's automated water dispensing system for the water truckers' outlets. The Works and Engineering Bulk Water Management System is a bulk water dispensing management software package for the Works and Engineering Department's water truckers' outlets. The software's user interface allows navigation between site, account, card and transaction screens. The software provides simultaneous multi-user access, security features and a centralised card database for multiple sites. The application is cloud-based and browser enabled, and can allow trucking companies to reconcile their transactions with their invoicing easily if they wish.

Mr. Speaker, the Tynes Bay Seawater Reverse Osmosis Plant is the primary source of government water supply for the central parishes. It is presently operating at almost maximum capacity. The central distribution system's water supply is also being

supplemented by water production at the Fort Prospect water treatment plant. The other previous central area production facility at Devon Springs Road is no longer operational due to obsolete existing control systems, equipment and structural issues with the building. For the western parishes, Mr. Speaker, the Tudor Hill Reverse Osmosis facility is back up to two water treatment units but still down from its original four-production-unit capacity. There is a plan to increase production via the installation of seawater plants in that location. The Department of Works and Engineering are in discussion with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on water rights to support that initiative.

And for St. George's Parish, there is a single RO [reverse osmosis] plant supplying water under contract. You will recall, however, Mr. Speaker, that previously I reported on the Water and Wastewater Master Plan and its first phase that is currently being implemented for St. George's Parish. That initiative is advancing and will provide the servicing required for the near term and future needs of the parish. Until that time, the system will have to be managed very carefully to ensure consistent access to water for the local community.

The current production capacity from all plants is unable to meet current demand. This has required water access restrictions to the distribution systems. For example, the reservoirs at Fort Prospect (Central Distribution hub) are presently being maintained at between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of capacity. During the hurricane season, which we are currently in, the policy has been to maintain the levels above 80 per cent to ensure emergency support to the hospital as well as other key water consumers.

Mr. Speaker, the West End Development Corporation (WEDCO) is continuing to assist in the west distribution system by providing supplementary water supply to a section of the system located between Dockyard and Watford Bridge.

As with all types of infrastructure, any catastrophic failure of the aforementioned plant or infrastructure will likely necessitate further reduced access to water by piped and water trucker customers until the failure is corrected.

Mr. Speaker, the following activities are being performed in the near-to-medium term to mitigate the effect of a possible dry spell and other issues outside of the control of the Water and Sewage Section: We are in the process of procuring a Dual Outlet "Island Style" Commercial Bulk Water Trucker Station. This unit will expand the Works and Engineering Bulk Water Management System, be located at Southside and use the BLDC [Bermuda Land Development Corporation] water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades (first phase of the master plan) to provide consistent access to trucked water for customers in the eastern end of the Island. The plan is to install and commission this outlet by March 2022.

In the latter part of the fiscal year, the remote monitoring and control system will be expanded with seven new electromagnetic flow meters and three tank level monitors at strategic locations to provide feedback in real time on demands and tank levels in the water distribution systems. We will also commission the functionality of using the remote monitoring system to monitor, trend and alarm adverse events concerning the recently retrofitted water treatment systems as well as the Tynes Bay Seawater Reverse Osmosis facility treatment systems.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry's Water and Sewage Section has also been working with an external agency, the Port Royal Golf Course, as well as Tourism by initiating a water servicing project for the Port Royal Golf Course. As Members may be aware, the Bermuda Championship fulfils the role of a pinnacle event for the Bermuda Tourism Authority's golf strategy—one of many events aligning with the National Tourism Plan. The Port Royal Golf Course has long struggled with the water supply for the golf course. This was more apparent in the run-up to the last championship event. The new initiative aims to improve and modify the water supply to the Port Royal Golf Course.

This improvement will take place in two phases. Phase I will include the installation of a pump system and supply line from a water catchment system located on the Morgan's Point property, installation of a transmission line from the Ministry's water distribution system to a modified internal existing water supply system, as well as initiating and managing a maintenance contract to monitor and maintain the existing saltwater reverse osmosis plants currently located at the Port Royal Golf Course. Phase 2 will include retrofitting and relocating the existing Port Royal Golf Course plants to the Ministry of Public Works Tudor Hill water treatment plant and supplying the Port Royal Golf Course from the Public Works water distribution system.

Mr. Speaker, the primary threat to operations during a drought at any time is suffering unpredictable mains breaks and water storage failures in a very old infrastructure. As such, we are working on a multi-year capital development programme to improve service levels to all customers over the next few years. With that said, Mr. Speaker, there still is a need for all Island residents to be conscious of their water usage this summer, regularly check their tanks, and above all, conserve water.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will agree that the Water and Sewage Section has been very busy over the last year. They currently have at service a staff of 17, all but one of whom are Bermudian, ably led by Mr. J. Tarik Christopher, Principal Engineer, Water and Sewage Section. They take tremendous pride in their work, and I wish to publicly commend and thank them for all of their efforts on behalf of the people of Bermuda in this very critical area. I am confident that

their efforts will soften the challenges we will face this summer with water production and delivery.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And now, Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements for this morning. We now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, we have both written questions and the questions from Statements given this morning. We will note the time is 11:10.

The first series this morning are the written questions, and the first written question is from MP Dunkley to Minister Wilson. There are three questions; however, each is to be responded to in writing.

So the question now is, Have the written responses been forwarded to MP Dunkley?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. The [written responses](#) were forwarded, I believe, in accordance with the process to the House this morning, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTIONS: COVID-19 VACCINE STATISTICS

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: *1. Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the total number of COVID-19 vaccinations administered weekly since the commencement in January through to the week ending June 12, 2021?*

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the weekly number of COVID19 vaccines discarded for any reason from the commencement of vaccinations to the week ending June 12, 2021?*

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with a breakdown, from commencement up until June 12, 2021, detailing the percentage of male and female, the percentage of each age group recorded as well as the racial breakdown of those administered?*

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

We will move on to the next set of questions, again from MP Dunkley to the Minister of Health. And those questions are for oral response. MP Dunkley, would you like to put your first question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to colleagues.

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM (TAF)

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The question to the Honourable Minister Wilson: Since the inception of the Travel Authorisation Form (TAF), will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the total amount of revenue collected every month up to June 30, 2021, as well as the monthly total of travellers (residents and visitors) submitting the required form and fee?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: For the month of July 2020, there were 3,766 travel authorisations. The revenue generated was \$234,693.14.

For August 2020, there were 7,202 travel authorisations; revenue, \$440,970.

September 2020, there were 6,223 travel authorisations, \$398,288.25 in revenue.

October 2020, there were 8,248 travel authorisations, revenue of \$517,963.05.

November 2020, there were 6,059 travel authorisations, revenue \$382,480.35.

December 2020, there were 6,949 travel authorisations, revenue \$428,168.39.

In January 2021, there were 4,210 travel authorisations, revenue of \$318,159.25.

February 2021, there were 2,511 travel authorisations, revenue of \$165,819.30.

March 2021, there were 4,731 travel authorisations, revenue of \$298,060.75.

April 2021, there were 5,192 travel authorisations, \$330,919.85 in revenue.

May 2021, there were 10,960 travel authorisations, revenue of \$715,042.75.

And June 2021, travel authorisations were 17,282, revenue of \$1,196,922.15.

Total travel authorisations, 83,333; revenue, \$5,427,487.23.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Are there supplementaries?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Just can the Honourable Minister repeat the total revenue? Because she started out at *five thousand*. I think it was meant to be *five million*. The last figure.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, \$5,427,487.23.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. No supplementaries on that question.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to put your second question?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Hold on, hold on. Is someone indicating they have a supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.
Can you tell us—

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am.
Can you tell us where the \$5.4 million in revenue is currently held?

The Speaker: Your volume was a little low, so I am just going to assist. Are you asking her, the revenue that was raised, where is it held?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is correct.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the funds are deposited into the Consolidated Fund.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Have we actually recovered the total amount of \$5.4 million?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: My understanding is that is correct, that the \$75 travel authorisation [fee] is due and payable upon completion of the travel authorisation.

The Speaker: Thank you. Those are your two supplementaries, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member have a supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I do have one supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: To the Honourable Minister: Does the Government track the number of travel authorisation forms that are submitted in error and not approved?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I do not have that information. I believe they do, but I cannot confirm. I do not have that in front of me, but I can report that back to the Honourable Member. I believe it is tracked, but I would have to confirm that.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Second supplementary. In that regard, I would appreciate the Minister endeavouring—

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Have there been any Bermudians who have been stopped at the border because they did not submit a travel authorisation form?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, that is obviously a matter within the public domain. There were some challenges two weekends ago with respect to persons attempting to return to Bermuda without the requisite travel authorisation form. But the Minister responsible for Transport has produced quite a lot of information surrounding that in the public domain.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any further supplementaries?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Learned and Honourable Minister, the \$5.4 million figure, would that include the \$75 fee for the forms? Or would that include also any fines that might have been levied in the event that people were travelling without forms?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That fee represents the amount of revenue generated from the travel authorisation.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary.

Mr. Scott Pearman: To understand that, any penalties that were applied would be in a separate number and not contained in that number, correct?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Correct. However, I will note that there have been no penalties applied with respect to persons who have not supplied their travel authorisations.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other person have a supplementary for this question, any other Member?

There are none. MP Dunkley, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM (TAF)

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide details of any and all fees paid out monthly to any vendors or consultants as part of any contracts or agreements in connection with the TAF, or any work associated as such, from the inception of the TAF until June 30, 2021?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, for June 2020 invoice number 1730, the total of \$49,913.58. August 2020 the [invoice] number was 1754, for a total of \$59,352.30.

For September 2020 invoice number 1757, total \$53,063.20. Invoice [number] 1764 for October 2020, total \$82,480.80.

November 2020 invoice 1765, total \$53,759.55. December 2020 invoice 1781, total \$56,539.41.

January 2021 invoice number 1789, total \$51,949.95. February 2021 invoice number 1797, total \$46,002.00.

Invoice 1789 for March 2021, total \$43,568.90. And April 2021 invoice 1806, total \$53,610.60, representing a total of \$550,240.29.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a clarification. The last amount was for April of \$53,000?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. The last amount was April 2021 invoice 1806, total \$53,610.60. The other months are being reconciled, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Those monthly amounts, whom are they to and what are they in connection with?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, those monthly amounts and whom are they in connection to are with respect to Question 3. So I can answer them again and then repeat the answer for Question 3.

I will take your lead, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, be mindful that your supplementary actually is part of your third question. So you can just do it under your third question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We can do that. But colleagues might have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. Does anyone have a supplementary on this second question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, put your question.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Minister provide a summary of the terms of the service agreement for the suppliers paid?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the summary of the contracts with respect to the terms are contained in the answers with respect to item number 3.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: If you want me to repeat them twice, I am fine to do that. I will take your lead.

The Speaker: We can leave it all on three, and get one open atmosphere of it.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am comfortable with that.

The Speaker: Okay.

Any further supplementaries?

There are none. MP Dunkley, would you like to put your third question now?

QUESTION 3: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM (TAF)

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide the complete details, including the names, addresses, type of company, a description of the work or service provided, and total compensation for any contracts with vendors or consultants associated with the TAF since its inception?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, as for the name and the address of the company and the individuals, and address, Denis Pitcher, address 31 Victoria Street, Hamilton, Bermuda HM 10; Melvin George, address 31 Victoria Street, Hamilton, Bermuda HM 10; Sean Pitcher, address 31 Victoria Street, Hamilton, Bermuda HM 10.

The type of company is resPartner Ltd. It is a limited liability company. It provides reservation and booking management software solutions customised to businesses specialising in bespoke scheduling and check-in solutions. Description of work is as follows, Mr. Speaker: Travel authorisation system. This function allows travellers coming to Bermuda to apply for a travel authorisation, for the applications to be vetted by health staff, and for approved travellers to be emailed a travel authorisation document.

The web portal for the inbound passengers allows them to register for a travel authorisation with a credit card payment option to pay for a travel authorisation application. The application form includes pre-arrival test uploads as mandatory. When submitting the application, the traveller is charged the appropriate fee. Fees must be paid using a credit or debit card, using an identified payment gateway. Applications are vetted by a health COVID-19 hotline team, who check on the validity of pre-arrival test uploads. The team has the ability to view the uploaded test results and approve or reject the application.

Approved applications automatically generate a travel authorisation document that is emailed to the traveller. There is a mariner and a crew portal customised to their needs. When a traveller arrives in Bermuda, health staff have the ability to bring up their travel authorisation records, book an arrival pass for the traveller and check in the traveller for the test. The check-in process would flag the arrival test to start. A report is available to the team showing all changes applied to travellers based on their travel authorisation number.

With respect to the operational and technical support, the company has a system that can migrate data from any existing system such as Excel spreadsheet or SharePoint; produce templates for all required documents, letters, licences, certificates, et cetera; provide project management and support dur-

ing preparations up to the system going live and following the go-live date to ensure successful installation into the list; individualisation of the product; train staff on how to operate the new system.

The system must be fully hosted and managed by the supplier. The government should not have to purchase any additional service. Fully integrate the system with other government systems such as to allow online payments, et cetera, the linkage to email systems and linkage. Provide updates to legislative changes, provide upgrades remotely and provide access to a support team.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

And the total compensation with respect to resPartner Ltd. is \$550,240.29.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any supplementaries?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: How long is the current contract with resPartner Ltd.?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I do not have that information in front of me. I believe it has transferred to a month-to-month [contract]. And we are going through the RFP [request for proposal] process to continue this programme with respect to the travel authorisation. So there is an RFP process that has been commenced.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: A second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: How is compensation determined? Is it a set fee percentage of travellers?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Compensation is determined per booking.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: And how much per booking, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I will have to get that information and revert back, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you. I appreciate it, Minister.

The Speaker: Does any other Member have supplementaries?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. They have been answered.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I have one supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue, MP Jackson.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, just a quick question. I am wondering if the Minister might be able to tell us how many employees are currently working at resQwest? Like, how large is the team?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I do not have that information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other?

There are none.

That brings us to an end of the written questions today. We will now move on to the questions that have been generated from the Statements given this morning.

Each Minister has questions from their Statements. We will begin with the Premier.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Just one minute. The Premier has been called away for a matter, and I was just trying to get acknowledgment if he was back yet. He is not back yet.

Let me go on to the other Statements, and we will come back to the Premier's Statement. Okay?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is fine.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Premier, your Statement this morning was in reference to the Planning Act, you have two Members who wish to ask questions. The first is MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING ACT 2021

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Deputy Premier, in your Statement today you identified three categories, three topics in relation to the new legislation. One was about protecting conservation areas. Another was special development orders.

On the issue of protecting conservation areas first, what is the process by which representations will be able to be made by members of the public in relation to a process where there is a protected conservation area to be applied to property and land?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

That process is currently being prepared and will certainly be underpinned going forward under the legislation in perhaps regulations.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: So the pages will be made available, obviously, for public viewing.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Minister, will those regulations or guidance be available prior to the debating of the Bill in two weeks' time so that we know what the Bill is effectively going to have in terms of practical outcome ramifications?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: The answer is yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful.

The Speaker: Okay. Any further supplementaries?

None.

Do you have a second question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: I have a second question, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your question.

**QUESTION 2: DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
ACT 2021**

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, on the other issue, the SDOs, the suggestion is that this process will be expedited. Do you agree with me that the proposal may—will result in a reduction of parliamentary oversight in respect of SDOs?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No. Because I believe that it is more important for public oversight of SDOs. And one thing is very clear by what I said in my Statement, that an application or submission for an SDO will still be preceded by the need for an environmental impact assessment or statement which will have public viewing as well as other requirements—well, obviously.

And there will be the period for public comment and scrutiny of that application prior to its being approved. So there may be some reduction of the parliamentary involvement, but the ultimate critique or review will be with the general public, of which any Minister would be, in my view, foolish to not take full recognition of.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Deputy Premier, are you aware of any specific SDOs that are coming down the pipeline which would fall into this new category of approach?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I can honestly say that no one has submitted any official request for [a] SDO to my Ministry at this time.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Second supp. Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Minister, has anyone submitted any unofficial requests to your Ministry at this time, given your answer?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Speaker: Would you like to put a third question, MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker, not from me. No.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: A supplementary? Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. So when it comes to, let us say a special development order, what is going to be the public recourse in the event that the Minister in charge and the appeal process—I mean, what is the recourse for an objector? Where can they escalate to if there is no parliamentary debate?

[Pause]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for you to acknowledge me.

The Speaker: Oh, oh, go ahead. Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I do not want to speak before you give me permission to speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Move right ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Member is delving into the details that would be more preferably given more flesh during the debate of the actual Bill. So I would actually defer. And if that is permissible, Mr. Speaker, that is a question that would be more appropriately answered when we get into the full debate of the Bill at the appropriate time.

The Speaker: Are you comfortable with that answer, MP?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I can wait. But I have one other supplementary to that.

The Speaker: Put your second supplementary then.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Would it be that any recourse, et cetera, would be a part of the regulations that will be tabled?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. All processes related to the process of the SDO will be clearly outlined in the new legislation. Public scrutiny will certainly be afforded, and there will be a process outlined as to how that public scrutiny can actually be deployed.

And I think Members should also be mindful, just going back to a previous question, that all negative resolutions are laid in the House, so there certain-

ly will be opportunity for the House to [take] notice and for Members to take up any opportunity to discuss a negative resolution at the appropriate time if this process and changed legislation is approved by the Legislature. So as required of all negative resolutions, they will be made and laid.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further supplementaries?

No further supplementary. Minister, you also have another MP who has questions for you on this Statement.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, no, I did not have it for the Deputy Premier. It was for the first Statement and the third Statement.

The Speaker: Oh, okay.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right. Noted. Okay. Thank you.

We now move on to the Statement by the Minister of Finance. And, Minister of Finance, you have two Members who have indicated they have questions for you this morning. The first is the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question this morning?

QUESTION 1: PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister quantify the value and number of payments made without prior approval by the Director of Workforce Development and the Permanent Secretary of Labour?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: No.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary? Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: When can the Minister provide that information?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Perhaps at the next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: Okay.

The Minister has given an undertaking that he will see if he can have it available for the next sitting.

Are there any further supplementaries?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Minister confirm the number of payments made before the new and amended regulations were brought into force?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Honourable Opposition Leader to provide clarity on which amended regulations he is speaking about because regulations [INAUDIBLE] several times.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the last sentence on page 3 of his Statement, and the top sentence on page 4.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, there were two sustenance-able rounds of unemployment benefits. The first round started with the announcement of the pandemic in early 2020. And then the second round would have started towards the end of last year, in December of 2020. So there were close to \$55 million, approximately—\$50 million spent on other benefits last year, and then since that time we have spent an additional \$17 million.

The Speaker: Okay. You have used both of your supplementaries.

Does any other Member have a supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you like to put your supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, you have mentioned that there are 10,000 people who have received the unemployment benefit and that there have been mistaken overpayments. Are you able to give percentages in terms of those 10,000 people or gross figures as to how many people were overpaid by one or other of the errors identified in your Statement?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Approximately 2,500 people received benefits in excess of the amounts that they were eligible for. That amount approximated about \$3.5 million, or about \$1,400 per person to date.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Can you please mute your microphone?

The Speaker: Yes. Opposition Leader, I think your conversation is bleeding in.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I can hear you. You can continue. Thank you.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: To date, 300 people have provided a refund to the government of approximately \$500,000. So the amount that is outstanding with respect to the overall programme is about 5 per cent.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Minister of Finance, I will defer to your math. But does that mean about \$3 million is outstanding and uncollected, roughly?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Yes, \$3.5 million less \$0.5 million is \$3.0 million.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any further supplementaries?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have a supplementary.

So how much of that has been recovered so far?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Oh. Sorry.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question.

The Speaker: You said a million, was it?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: No, \$500,000.

The Speaker: It is \$500,000.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

No further supplementaries on that?
Opposition Leader, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

The Minister indicated that there were new processes implemented and developed to ensure that there were checks and balances and to ensure an effective audit trail. Can the Minister provide confirmation that the Auditor General or that his auditor was involved in this process and that they signed off on the new process?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We proactively, at some point in the middle of 2020, engaged PwC [PricewaterhouseCoopers] to do an audit of our processes and the controls in place. We later, in the second phase of the programme, decided to change the way in which people verified their status as being employed or remaining unemployed. In the earlier phase of the programme, there was an honour system that required people to notify us once they had returned back to work, which is largely the reason why overpayments were made to [INAUDIBLE] people confirming that they had returned back to work.

Under the new, revised programme applicants were required to advise the government every week before payment cycle was made that they remained unemployed. If people did not confirm that they remained unemployed, they did not receive a payment. Payments were also made in arrears in the second phase of the [programme] as opposed to being made in advance.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The Honourable Minister mentioned an outside entity doing an audit. What was the cost of that audit?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: It might have been \$20,000, if that much.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any further supplementaries?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I had a supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister indicated in the first paragraph of his presentation that there was a legislative mechanism to offset funds owed arising from benefits paid against future payments. Is there a mechanism in place whereby the individual involved has to approve or sign off on this process?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Not that I am aware of, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Another supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So individuals can have the offset without providing approval, is what the Minister is saying?

[Pause]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I think that is what "I am not aware of" means. What we have done, Mr. Speaker, in the cases where we have already collected funds, where we do not have the ability currently to offset, is we have been in touch with the affected individuals and in some instances with their employers. Because their employers have helped to facilitate the collection of the data required to provide the individuals with the benefit. And we have worked with people who have voluntarily refunded the government the amounts for which they were overpaid.

What we do not want to do is get into the business of going to court around recovering these amounts of monies, because in the first instance the cost of the court process is an additional burden for the individual as well as the government. And we have had, up until now, very good reactions, receptivity from individuals who in most instances acknowledged that they were overpaid and that they made a mistake in terms of not getting back to us in the appropriate amount of time.

I do not foresee this being particularly challenging, although I think that for the sake of good order, we should have the tools available to us inasmuch as few people are entitled to future benefits and have not repaid amounts that they were paid in error.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Supplementary, MP Pearman.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable Minister of Finance, in terms of the term "benefits" that the repayments are going to be sought from individuals, which benefits will be they be clawed back from? Are they just future unemployment benefits, or would they be clawed back from any government benefits?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Primarily unemployment benefits. We are not contemplating affecting other benefits that persons might need.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, in terms of the clawback (if I can use that expression) will the government apply needs-testing to that recovery of money?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we endeavour to work with people to recover the funds that were overpaid. It is not intended to be a confrontational exercise. The team that we have in place that has worked on this project for the better part of the last 14 or 15 months is a relatively small team, four to five people. I think by any objective measure, when asked by the public to assess these folks, they would report that these folks have been very responsive and open to working with people in terms of their circumstances in terms of getting them moving. So I do not foresee any change in posture of the team that has worked so hard over the course of the last year-and-a-bit to try to ensure that people in their times of need were provided with the support that the government was providing.

Similarly, in working to recover those amounts that have been past due (on average that \$1,400 per person, so about three weeks' of unemployment benefits), I am endeavouring to ensure the team has the same posture.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Any further supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker, yes.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, in regard to the recovery, what parameters has the Government provided those who are faced with the task of reaching out and trying to recover the money? What parameters have they provided them? For example, if somebody is unemployed, and we know the unemployment rate is quite high at the present time . . . if somebody is unemployed how much grace are they given before they even have to consider any repayment?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The discretion with respect to grace is mine. And at this point the team has not been very active in terms of the remaining cases that are outstanding. I think we have suspended the calls on this effort, you know, in trying to focus on getting the second phase of the programme completed, as we have worked to get the Island back up and running.

My sense is that there is an extensive database. The team will report in to the Ministry how they are progressing. Inasmuch as there are difficult hardship cases, they will seek our approval to provide some degree of latitude to folks. But in the grand scheme of things, I would say the programme has been tremendously successful in that we have gotten most people their money. And we have had a 5 per cent error rate, if you can call it that. So we will just work with people to get the money back.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Final supplementary?

The Speaker: Your second supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, final supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to this process, am I correct, Minister, in assuming that every benefit payment will have to be reviewed to make sure it was done in the proper way? Or if not, ratified in the proper way?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: No. That is not the case. In the early days of the programme, Mr. Speaker, my recollection (and I remember this vividly) is that there was a press conference held on a Tuesday advising folks that this programme would be stood up. And my team and I were responsible for getting people paid by Friday, so in three days. As you can imagine, getting over 3,000 people paid in three days and getting a programme stood up required a lot of work.

As a result—and I think I have said this in the House and in my other public statements—as the Minister Finance, I am responsible for Financial Instructions and I have the authority to vary them as I deem appropriate. And so the Financial Instructions

do allow me some degree of flexibility to break the rules or change the rules. So, in a spirit of efficiency, instead of having people follow the rules around providing all of their data, we allowed employers to assist us in making submissions on behalf of their employees. And then we went back to kind of validate that information. So there were a number of controls in place.

Of course, all controls are not perfect. And as the time went on, we were able to tighten up the programme as to where we now are where we pay in arrears and folks are required to confirm their status before a payment is made to them.

We also have more robust documentation.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does anyone else have a supplementary?

There are none. Opposition Leader, do you have a third question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am done, thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, the other Member who indicated he had questions for you was MP Dunkley.

MP, do you still wish to put questions, or did your supplementary cover it?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: We covered it, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister.

The Speaker: No problem.

We will now move on. The next Statement is that of the Minister of Education.

Minister, your second Statement in reference to the Summer Professional Learning, there is a question from MP Jackson.

MP Jackson, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SUMMER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATORS

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Minister.

Yes, I am just curious when and to how many grade levels will these concepts be introduced?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I am not sure . . . what does she mean by “concepts”? I spoke to Creative Curriculum and Project Based Learning, and the Statement states that those are for pre-school/kindergarten. And the Blended Learning, if you refer to a previous Statement that I made, was something that we are introducing at the primary level.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: So that would be all schools, all students at that level?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The idea is we have to start somewhere. So the idea is that eventually we will move to the Blended Learning module throughout the Bermuda Public School System. This previous COVID-19 year it was used quite successfully at the high school level and in some cases at the middle school level. We have had pilots going on at the primary school level to see how we can introduce that even more so in the upcoming year.

With reference to the previous Statement I had made two weeks ago, or one or two sittings ago, that talked about the Chromebooks that will be issued to all primary school students from P5 through P6, that was when we talked about the Blended Learning being integrated into that as well.

And so it is something that is in progress as we speak, and I will continue to provide updates as we roll out the programme even more so.

The Speaker: Thank you.
A supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, I have a supplementary.

The Minister has just mentioned “integrated.” Are these programmes going to be integrated into the existing curriculum? Or is this something that will be integrated or a part of the introduction of these . . . part of the transformation and the new curriculum?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: As noted in the Statement, I made several references to 21st century learning. And the Member is aware of our school reform which includes not just the upgrading of buildings, but the introduction of a revamped school curriculum as well that introduces what we labelled 21st Century Learning Modules. So it will be part of the new curriculum.

The thing that has happened with us is that COVID-19 has caused us to accelerate some of these things much faster than what the original planning was. So some things are just out of sync from where they would have naturally been, including the remote learning and integrated learning.

So as we move forward, again as I said, I will provide updates on a regular basis on where we are with that and how it is benefiting our students within our system.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am done.

The Speaker: Do you have a second question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No second question.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, MP Jackson. I appreciate your [INAUDIBLE].

The Speaker: Yes. Okay.

We will now move on. I see that the Premier is back at his desk. We can go back to the questions for the Premier.

Premier, MP Dunkley has a question for you on your Statement this morning.

Would you like to put your question, MP?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. But if the Opposition Leader has a question, I defer to him first.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I had one.

The Speaker: No, he did not. It was just you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I had one too, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. Sorry.

The Clerk: Right at the top, the very first—

The Speaker: Yes, yes. It is noted there. Yes, okay.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: MOVING BERMUDA'S TOURISM BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

Mr. Premier, you touched on Fairmont Southampton. It is my understanding that Fairmont Southampton has been designated a quarantine site. How long will this be a quarantine site? And how will it impact the redevelopment of the hotel?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I go? (My apologies.)

The Speaker: Yes. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. I thank the Honourable Opposition Leader for his question.

At this point in time the Fairmont Southampton is targeting the commencement of their operations, if all finance is able to be done, in September. And we will not be able to use the facility as a quarantine hotel at that point in time. But it remains to be seen.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Premier provide more details and an update on the Fairmont redevelopment plan?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Somebody is in there, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. We just muted them.

Go ahead, Opposition Leader. Put your supplementary.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Premier provide details and an update on Fairmont Southampton's development plan? I know he just touched on it. But does he have any more information that he could share with the people of Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I am not entirely certain what details the Honourable Opposition Leader is asking for. I think that those statements have been made in public, that the Government continues to work [with] and tries to support the work and efforts of the owners and the developers in securing financing to fulfil it. I know that the Minister of Finance, myself and the Honourable Member from constituency 31, who assist me, went and took a look at the model room. We have made ourselves available to meet with investors if necessary.

And we will continue to do that to support the development. But the most important thing is that the developer does what is necessary in order to advance this project. And that will be making sure that the financing and funding are in place.

I am excited. I think it is an amazing and transformational project of which they look to engage in. I think the estimated amount of investment is \$300 million, a complete transformation of all of the rooms, a complete transformation of the Beach Club, [and] many particular areas. I think that it is certainly incredible, and we are continuing to support those efforts. But as the Honourable Opposition Leader can imagine, as he works in financial services, it is certainly a difficult and uncertain environment in this space.

And Bermuda is not unique in the challenges in regard to certainly making sure that we can finance such a complex development project. But we are continuing to work with the developers.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? Second supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: As this is a designated quarantine site until September, based on the Premier's comments, what type of remuneration programme does the Government have with the owners of this property in regard to its being used as a quarantine site?

Hon. E. David Burt: There is no remuneration, Mr. Opposition Leader. I think the rates were published. I think it is \$185 for individuals. So we are going to continue to work through that. But there is nothing special that is taking place, nothing outside of what is taking place at the other establishments.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. Those are my questions.

The Speaker: Okay. So no further questions at all?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Not from me.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: MOVING BERMUDA'S TOURISM BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Honourable Premier: Honourable Premier, on your second page, I believe it is the third paragraph, you read, "Mr. Speaker, since those days much has been rebuilt and visitor confidence in Bermuda remains high. That confidence saw us chosen to host certain events whose original locations could not deliver the safe experience . . ."

In regard to that [statement], my question to the Honourable Premier is (yes or no): In referring to "host[ing] certain events," was the Revolve event that was held earlier this summer one of those events?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: The answer is no.

The *Revolve* event was not a hosted event. (It was a clever one there by the Honourable [Member].) What we are talking about is certainly the fact that we were able to host the first in-person golf tournament event last year with the PGA Championship and also other events last year, certainly without question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: As the company mentioned has high-profile people with them, traveling with them and their exposure goes worldwide, was the BTA [Bermuda Tourism Authority] aware, supportive of or involved in the Revolve event?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I can refer the Honourable Member to the public statements which were made by the Bermuda Tourism Authority. I cannot necessarily speak . . . but if the Honourable Member wishes to ask a specific question on that, I am happy to go ahead and get the answer for him.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I just asked the question, so I would appreciate the answer from the Honourable Premier. Was the BTA aware, supportive of, or involved in, the event?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, my answer will remain the same.

The Speaker: Yes. I think that basically the answer was that it is in the public knowledge, in short form? Is that basically what you are saying, Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: I said that the Honourable Member can refer to the statements which have been released from the Bermuda Tourism Authority. And if he has any specific matters on which he wants to follow up on that specific issue, he is more than welcome to put them in writing and we will seek to get the answers to them.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: It is your second supplementary.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes.

As the Premier is the Minister of Tourism, and I assume would be updated on happenings within the BTA, was he aware of the Revolve event?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Was I aware that Revolve was coming to Bermuda? Absolutely.

The Speaker: Those are your two supplementaries on that question. Do you have a second question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: MOVING BERMUDA'S TOURISM BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: If the Premier was aware that Revolve was coming to Bermuda, why were not precautions put in place so that they follow every COVID-19 restriction?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think that you would be making an assumption. That is not correct to say that, *why precautions were not put in place*, because clearly precautions and things were issued by the Ministry of National Security. The Honourable Member would be aware that there is certainly an investigation that is taking place, and the Minister of National Security went on record in speaking about the challenges of which were there.

So, I recognise the Honourable Member is trying to make political mischief, but I will say two things: Number one, Mr. Speaker, this of course has nothing to do with the Statement. The first question that the Honourable Member asked was, *Was one of these events the ones that we are speaking about?* We said no, and he has continued down this line of questioning when we are trying to talk about moving beyond the pandemic. But at the same point in time, Mr. Speaker, I will entertain him because I guess that is the line the Opposition would like to be on.

The Speaker: Well, just for clarity, it is not necessarily political mischief. He is just asking a question. Everybody is entitled to ask a question.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will just say this—

The Speaker: But you gave him his answer, and you put it in context. And we will accept that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Standing Orders require that questions be related to the Statement. And there was nothing in this Statement in regard to anything of which he is speaking about. But I will go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. And I understand it is a touchy subject. But this is Question Period, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. That answered my questions, Honourable Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Hold on one second.

MP Swan, I keep muting you, and you keep turning your microphone back on. Do you want to put a question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Perhaps he wants to put in a question.

The Speaker: MP Swan? Okay, I am muting you. Please keep your microphone off.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier has told the Honourable House that he was aware of the Revolve event. Could the Honourable Premier also tell this Honourable House approximately when he became aware of the Revolve event; more specifically, was it on the day itself when he posted his tweets? Or was he involved before that?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that Revolve has been to Bermuda sponsored by the Bermuda Tourism Authority. Revolve has been to Bermuda. And when the Honourable Member is saying “the Revolve event,” a series of events were held by Revolve which were held on Island. And I was aware that Revolve was coming on Island and was hosting a series of events.

As to the specifics of them, no. The statements that have been made in the public domain are the statements of which stand. Mr. Speaker, what I would say is it is very interesting that the Honourable Members of the Opposition at no point in time have asked anything regarding the content of this Statement or how we are moving forward with tourism. So I guess that I understand where the interest of the Opposition lies.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes, second supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe the Honourable Premier answered the ques-

tion posed, although he tap-danced around it very well.

Honourable Premier, would you like to answer the question as to when you became involved and aware?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I do not know when I became involved or aware. What I can say is that there was certainly . . . as the Minister responsible for Tourism, I knew that Revolve was coming to Bermuda. They are a high-profile group. I think what the Honourable Member is trying to do is to get something on the record to say something about, *The Premier knew that there were some boats or things*, and all the rest. The answer to the question is *no*.

So we can re-align and state again. Number one, Mr. Speaker, we knew that Revolve was coming to Bermuda. Yes, that is a fact. That is there. I was aware that they were coming. I was aware that they were holding events. I do not even know how many days they were here for—four, five, six? I was aware.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You had your two supplementaries.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other Members with a supplementary?

There are none.

Thank you, Premier, for responding.

We will now go back to the Statements that have questions this morning. And that takes us to the Minister of Labour.

Minister of Labour, you have questions this morning on your Statement from MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: IMMIGRATION REFORM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Minister, in your Statement today on page 5, you said that “the Ministry of Labour will continue its work to use immigration as a lever to support the local economy.” Lest it be said that the Opposition is always here to create political mischief, may I just commend that statement, which I support the philosophy. You identified four priorities. Are those in a particular order in terms of importance? Or are they four priorities of equal importance?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Opposition for their support. And there are four priorities of equal importance.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No supplementary from me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. No supplementary from anyone?
Thank you.

We now move on to the last Statement this morning, which was given by the Minister of Works.

Minister of Works, you have a question this morning from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question to the Minister?

QUESTION 1: SUMMER WATER SHORTAGE

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.
Can the Minister provide the total revenues earned by the government at the water trucking stations across the Island annually?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information before me. But I am sure it is readily available, and I will get it.

The Speaker: Okay.
Member, the Minister has made an indication that he can get it to you at a different sitting.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Supplemental.

The Speaker: Supplemental? Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: How much does the government charge for each load of water that a trucker takes from our station?

The Speaker: I do not know if that was in the Statement.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, I do not see the cost.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I do not know the answer to that either. But I am sure I could get that answer before this session ends.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you very much. I will yield until he gets the answers, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any supplementaries from any other Member?

No supplementary.
That brings us to a close of the question-and-answer period, and we are three minutes short of the allotted 60 minutes. Thank you.
We will now move on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That sounds like MP Foggo.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have your three minutes.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I would like to give condolences for Mr. Andre Minors. Gone too soon, a young man, a constituent of mine down in St. David's here. And I just want condolences to go out to his family and the community, who will greatly miss Andre.

I would also like to send out congratulatory remarks, and I will keep them brief because I am sure the Minister of Education will say far more than me.

The Speaker: Can you speak up just a little bit, MP?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Sure. I would also like to give congratulatory remarks, and I will keep them very brief because I am sure the Minister of Education will have far more in-depth comments to make for the graduates in general of CedarBridge and Berkeley, but in particular (I have to be honest) for the graduates of Berkeley Institute, I think our young people have done extremely well in spite of all of the odds that they faced. The Minister made mention in his Ministerial Statement of all of the odds that they faced with respect to the COVID-19.

So hats off to them all! Hats off to the number of students graduating, the high percentage that have graduated in each of our public high schools. And on that note I will gladly stop because I hope to hear more from the Education Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It sounds like the Minister of Education wants to follow those last comments, so I am going to acknowledge the Minister of Education.

You have your three minutes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will try to be very quick because I have quite a bit.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, some obituaries. [Condolences] to the family of Mr. Carlton "Pluke" Smith down there on Somersall Road, another young man whom we have lost far too soon. I grew up with Carlton. I served on several committees with him for Eastern County for Harrington Workmen's Club and for the Cleveland County Cricket team.

Also, Ms. Sandra DeSilva, again of Devil's Hole, of Ramgoat Hill, wife of our dearly departed "Red" DeSilva, who unfortunately has passed.

I want to send condolences to the family of William James "Jimmy Doc" Richardson, beloved husband of Sonja Gibbons-Richardson, a teacher, a paraprofessional within our system and a constituent of mine. My condolences to them.

And I also want to join MP Lovitta Foggo for condolences to Andre Minors. Lovitta may not know this, but I actually grew up next door to Andre when he lived on Somersall Road, he and his family. My condolences to his family.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send congratulations to the 13 teachers who completed the BTIP last week. We had a virtual showing of them. For those who do not know, the BTIP is the Bermuda Teacher Induction Programme. It is a two-year mentoring programme that all new teachers must go through within the Bermuda Public School System. It is always one of those things I look forward to because the teachers give their testimonials and such. And there are always accolades given to the mentor teachers whom we have within our system who are specifically there to work with our young teachers, to get them ready for the rigours of moving into the profession. So congratulations to those 13 teachers who have completed that programme!

As MP Foggo did speak, I want to send hearty congratulations to all of our graduates from our senior high schools, public and private, who have gone through quite a bit these last two years of COVID-19 interruptions to get to the point where they are graduating. But I also want to congratulate all of the other schools, our middle schools, our primary schools and our preschools in their leaving ceremonies for those as well. Because they have been affected by COVID-19 just like our graduating seniors have been affected. And it was a pleasure to go to as many of those events as I could, as we could finally have something

to celebrate of the leaving ceremonies of our students as they move on to their respective next levels.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Lister, I think I heard you before and I hear you again. Go ahead. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to start off on a sad note, Mr. Speaker, by sending condolences to the family of Mr. Ra-Che Williams, who last week passed from a road traffic collision. So I would like to send condolences to his family.

Some Hon. Members: Associate me, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The other Members have asked to be associated. Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to associate with the comments from both previous speakers in congratulatory remarks to all graduates of all levels, primary, pre-school, middle school and high school. To wish them well in their future endeavours.

Also, Mr. Speaker, some celebratory remarks to the Canadian nationals living in Bermuda, as yesterday was Canada Day, and to the American nationals [because] Sunday will be [their] Independence Day, on July 4, Mr. Speaker.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, in between those, I would like to send birthday wishes to none other than my wife [because] tomorrow will be her birthday, Ms. Alicia Lister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have those comments.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member . . . I hear the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to send condolences to a great family who is close to Bermuda who

lives overseas. Mr. Speaker, as you know, Elliot Mottley and Amor Mottley were in Bermuda. And their son recently died unexpectedly in Barbados. So I wish to send condolences to the Prime Minister of Barbados, Ms. Mia Mottley and her parents Elliot and Amor Mottley, for the passing of their son and brother, Warren Mottley. It was unexpected, and I think Bermuda should embrace them during this difficult time.

I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard to the graduates of our private schools, public schools, primary schools and pre-schools. Our students should be very, very proud of their achievements. They did well during such tenuous circumstances, and they should continue to be saluted. Along with them, the same kudos should go with our teachers because they in addition had to work under strenuous circumstances, and they did a sterling job in delivering curricula to our students whereby they were positioned to graduate this year.

I would like to also associate myself with the comments made in regard to the Bermuda Teacher Induction graduates. I have been to a number of those events, and they were always moving. The new teachers were so keen and committed to education. And they put their heart and soul in education and prepared themselves for a wonderful and long-lasting career. So again, congratulations to the graduates and to the teachers. And I would like to associate Ms. Susan Jackson with the comments.

I would like to also associate myself with the comments made by MP Lister in regard to the Canadians on the Island in regard to Canada Day, and the American friends for the Fourth of July celebrations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.
Would any other Member?
I hear the Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you like to have your three minutes now?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the remarks concerning condolences for William “Jimmy Doc” Richardson. William was the nephew of former Senate President Hugh Richardson. He was certainly close to me. He was actually the brother of my sisters Dina and Dawnette, and brothers Elbert and those guys.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the remarks [regarding] Sandra Trott Dickinson Joyiens [DeSilva]. She comes from around Frog Alley up in the hill up there, very, very nice, nice person. She will certainly be sorely missed by her family.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the remarks [regarding] Carlton “Pluke” Smith. I am sure the name Pluke is a nickname. I am sure his father gave him that name, because it sounds like something his father would say. Pluke was a former Captain of the world’s most exciting County Cup team, Harris Bay. And he was also President at one time and coach of the under-13s. Pluke gave his all, no matter whether he was a player on the field, captain, president or coach of the under-13 fellows.

One of the stalwarts of the club, McNeil McGowan, said that Pluke would go and pick up the young boys. He was the coach of the under-13s. [He would] pick them up and deliver them back at home [after] training. And he also said that one of Pluke’s dreams was that every young player who played Junior County would end up playing the Senior County for the most exciting team in the Eastern County.

Pluke was a no-nonsense type of guy. He did not take foolishness lightly. If you acted up on the field, most times, I would say 90 per cent of the time, Pluke would suspend you right there, right on the field. I can tell you, I think Pluke was the type of guy, I would venture to say, who honoured his mother and his father, Barbara Smith and Carlton P. Smith, [PHONETIC] who ran for the Progressive Labour Party in the 1970s. He also looked out for his sister. He was dedicated not only to his family; he was dedicated to the Harris Bay Cleveland County team and the Harris Bay community. He would be a guy who is going to be sorely missed down there in Harris Bay, a great person, a great guy gone too soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan, it looks like I see you on the video, and I hear you coming through there.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I know you like the colours.

Mr. Speaker, it is on a sad occasion and note that I bring condolences on the passing of Mr. Calvin [Reginald] “Spryer” Hodsoll from St. George’s, who was very much associated with the Ebenezer Methodist Church.

An Hon. Member: Associate me, please.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And MP Foggo and Minister Ming, I am certain, as they know him and MP Burgess, I am sure. Anybody else who wishes to be as-

sociated would attest to the fact that he was a well-known and a well-respected and a well-liked St. Georgian. His trade of plumbing caused him to have to come to the rescue of *many* a family in need. His family connections are significant in the St. George's community, notwithstanding that [the] Hodsoll and Wellington Hill connection is very, very strong in there, even that Ferry Reach camping community of which I will sorely miss this summer when I run by to bring greetings to the Hodsolls out there. I am sure their family will miss Spryer, and all of his many friends in St. George's, Mr. Speaker, will surely miss him.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations I would like to bring to my colleague, Minister Renee Ming, who has carried on a legacy and a tradition started by her mentor, the Honourable Dame Jennifer Smith, with the Future Leader Awards, an event that had to be reconfigured over the last years because of COVID-19, honouring the young students who are coming out of middle school and primary school in our communities. I am sure if she gets the opportunity, she will single out those individuals who were honoured. But I just want to congratulate her for continuing on a great legacy established by a great leader of the country and someone very much committed to education during her entire tenure, and young people, during her tenure as a parliamentarian—and that was Dame Jennifer Smith.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sounds like Honourable Premier. Would you like to have your three minutes?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, sir.

Hon. E. David Burt: I do not believe I will take that long, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, on a sad note you will see that I am wearing green today. Green of course is the colour of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party, Mr. Speaker. But it is also the colour that friends and family of the young Mr. Ra-Che Williams have asked to wear today in his honour. And I would like the House to send condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Ra-Che Williams, who tragically lost his life in a hit-and-run collision.

Mr. Williams was a very well-respected individual, a kind-hearted young man. And he was also a valued team member within the Ministry of Health, working on our coronavirus response. It is certainly so sad to lose someone so young. And myself, I have known his mother, Rachel Bailey, for just about my

entire life. And as you can imagine, losing your only child in circumstances such as this, it is without question very crushing. So many of his friends have reached out and expressed their grief and expressed their concern. You can see with the outpouring of support for this young man that he was truly respected and loved inside of his community.

He loved his job, and he was a humble and loving spirit. And I would hope that this Honourable House—and I would like to associate all Members will this—will send a letter of condolences to his mother, Ms. Rachel Bailey, on her loss in these tragic circumstances. I know that the Minister of Health acknowledged at a press conference that he was a valued team member. But I just want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the House can be on record for expressing our condolences to his family.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will just ask if I can be associated with the congratulations which have been made to all of our graduating seniors. And certainly I associate with congratulations that were given by the Honourable Member from constituency 2 in regards to the Honourable Minister from constituency 1.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Is that . . .

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes, it is the Attorney General.

The Speaker: Oh, yes. Madam Attorney General. I was trying to catch your voice that time. You have your three minutes.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness today that I would like to acknowledge the passing of [Joycelyn] "Sophie" O'Brien. She was the mother of my Permanent Secretary, Marva O'Brien. And she has two sons, Dennis and Delroy. And she will be sadly missed and memorialised by not only her family, but the Loyal Hill community.

Some Hon. Members: Associate me, Mr. Speaker. Associate me as well, Mr. Speaker. Can you associate me as well, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. There are many Members who want to be associated with you, Attorney General. Continue.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Including the Honourable Premier and my own colleagues.

She was—and it is hard to say “was” because you still feel her presence, it was so strong—she was an amazing matriarch of the O’Brien clan. She was a fabulous stalwart in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And my acquaintance with her started when I was five years old. She was from Loyal Hill. And I am sure that neighbourhood is grieving as we speak. They lived in Loyal Hill; I lived on the other side of the hill. And I attended Elliot Primary School with Marva and her sons. She was an amazing woman of incredible strength, who originated from Jamaica and made her home in Bermuda, raised a family and showed a resilience that is characteristic of Black women of that time and will survive her today.

I cannot even spend the time to give all of the anecdotal fond memories that we have and I have of that family. But today is a very sad day. I am heartened by the fact that the family has a tremendous support system. But it does not matter whom you surround yourself with. The memories and legacy of the mother will continue on. She certainly will be sadly missed. But her legacy will continue in her children and her grandsons. And today I express condolences to that family on behalf of myself, my family and the entire House. We will certainly miss her.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on to happy news, I am pleased to acknowledge someone who is very special to me, one Shi-Vaughn Lee, one of our young people who is rising to great heights as a young entrepreneur. Colleagues and Mr. Speaker may recall that Shi-Vaughn was one of my pupils in the Attorney General’s Chambers who was actually called to the Bar in 2019. And she took the bold step of determining that her future was not in law and that she was going to turn her attention—and she is quite a brilliant and purposeful and hard-working young woman—to being an entrepreneur. And for those of us who have young people, she is the owner and proprietor of Dove & Butterfly. Dove & Butterfly is a business that makes and sells also—

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Madam Attorney General, I think you may hear that sound which is the alarm saying that your three minutes have expired.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The Speaker: Minister Ming, I see you in front of the camera there. Go right ahead.

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and colleagues and listening audience.

First of all, I would like to be associated with the comments for Calvin Hodsoll. Mr. Hodsoll, “Spryer” as he would be known to our more mature St. George’s community, was definitely well-known, well-liked and one of those plumbers you could call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and he would be there to assist. He will truly be missed by the St. George’s community.

I would also like to extend condolences to the Baker family on the loss of their mom, their grandmother, their friend, the aunt, the family, Ms. Lois Baker. They are truly in our thoughts and prayers today. Mr. Speaker, on a very happy note, my colleague did mention that we hosted our Future Leaders of Bermuda Awards ceremony last evening. Mr. Speaker, this is one of those events that warms your heart and lets you know that the future is bright. What I saw in that space yesterday, there were future Ministers of National Security, there were future Premiers. These are young people, Mr. Speaker, who are doing amazing things. And at a young age, they have demonstrated that they are leaders in their own right. What was spoken of them yesterday was that they [will] become leaders who will actually make a difference.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Kyori Allbouy, Pria Denbrook, Yalen Sewell, Dimon O’Connor, Tayori Perinchief, Darian Seymour, Page DeSousa, Nazai Thompson-Swan. Well done! It is an amazing group of young people. They have an excellent village supporting them. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that we will see more from them and great things to come. So, Mr. Speaker, on that note I would just like to congratulate them once again, and thank you very much for the time.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Before I acknowledge any other Member, let me just note that it is now 12:30, and there is a committee meeting that is supposed to take place during lunch, which I and other Members have to sit in. If the other Members who want to make a contribution, just a couple, we could probably do them. If it is more than that, I am going to suggest that we continue with the condolences and congratulations at two o’clock when we return from lunch.

Is there indication that there are quite a few more Members who wish to make a contribution?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Seems like it. Okay.

Premier, I am going to ask that you break for lunch now, and we will continue the condolences and congratulations when we return.

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

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. The House stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:31 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.
Members?

Some Hon. Members: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

We are back. The House is now resuming after our lunch break. When we broke, we were still on the Condolences and Congratulatory Remarks.

Are there any other Members who would like to make a contribution?

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuation thereof]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker. Tyrrell.

The Speaker: Mr. Tyrrell, MP Tyrrell?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Tyrrell, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, earlier—

The Speaker: If I can ask you to adjust yourself closer to the microphone?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Okay.

Earlier, as I said, many of my colleagues made reference to graduations in Bermuda being very special, especially this year with our students having to (I will use the word) “suffer” under COVID-19 regulations and things like that. I thought it necessary to single out three of my students in my constituency, if you do not mind.

The first one is Rufaro Kunze, Rufaro is 11 years old and he has graduated from Purvis Primary and he is going on toward the Academy. Rufaro has been a very excellent student both scholastically and athletically because all during this year he had been house captain, has broken several of the athletic records, he has been head boy in this last year. So, I certainly wish him all the best. And he is the son of Taitu and Cain Kunze in Rocklands, [who are] my neighbours.

The second one is Anias Godfrey, another young man who attended the Mt. St. Agnes Academy. He has graduated and is going on to High Point University in North Carolina. His line of study will be information technology, specialising in cybersecurity. And during his time at Mt. St. Agnes he enrolled in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and attained the Bronze Award. He was also house captain as well, and he is the son of Alaire and Andre Godfrey in Warwick [IN-AUDIBLE].

And the third one that I need to mention is Amiah Butterfield, actually, my next-door neighbour, who graduated from the Berkeley Institute and will be attending St. Mary's University in Canada. Her course of study will be speech language pathology. She is the daughter of Kamisha and Joseph Butterfield in [IN-AUDIBLE].

As I still have time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences for a very good friend of mine, Mr. William (Jimmy Doc) Richardson. Jimmy Doc was a star player for the Boulevard Community Club. He and I had many friendly battles on the field, but there was always a lot of laughter after the game as we got together and had the usual 19th hole drink—that is a golf term. But he will be missed. In his community he was well-known and well-liked.

So, I thank you very much for that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tyrrell.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That sounds like MP Simmons-Wade.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, it is.

The Speaker: Okay, MP, you have your three minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Thank you.

I would like to give my condolences to Rev. Dr. Arnold Hollis on the death of his wife, Janice Hollis, as well as to their three daughters. Ms. Hollis moved to Bermuda many, many years ago to support her husband at St. James Church. She was really very much the wind beneath his wings. She also was

an organist at the church and very, very involved in the community. And she was a dietician at the hospital for over 35 years. So, my condolences to the family.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Campbell, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, forgive me if these have already been raised because I am joining late, unavoidably.

First of all, I would like congratulatory remarks to go out to Mr. Johnny Campbell for graduating with the 2021 class at Berkeley Institute. He happens to be very close to me, he is my son, and I just want those remarks to go out.

I would like condolences to be sent to the family of Kathleen Ester Ford. And please stop me if these have already gone out.

The Speaker: No, continue on.

Mr. Vance Campbell: She was the wife of the late Patro Ford and the mother of Gaynell Hayward-Caesar, John “Buddy” Ford, Russ Ford, Patrice Ford-Smith, Melony Ford-Douglas, and the late Patro “Tony” Ford. Many of us will remember her when she owned the Ford’s New World Bakery over on Glebe Road. Many of us in this Chamber can attest to the fact that she was a gifted baker. And she was also a long-term and respected member of the Devonshire community.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Please associate me, Honourable Member.

Thank you.

Mr. Vance Campbell: So done, sir.

And lastly, condolences go out to the family of Carlton “Pluke” Smith. He was a past president and captain of the Cleveland County Cricket Club and also a very keen coach and had a strong interest in the youth. And I would like condolences to be sent to his family. He will be a big miss in the Cleveland County community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

No other Member?

Before we move on, I would just like to add a couple of comments as well. And I will start where the last Member just ended in regard to giving condolences to the Ford family. And I would like to add my comments to that, as well, in that I have actually known Ms. Ford for a long time and I first really got to know her from the bakery days. When I had my grocery business, we used to get fresh baked goods from her to sell at our store in Somerset. She and her husband were always extremely positive and uplifting and their food was very tasty—let me attest to that. It was one of the items that we could not keep on our shelves. But my condolences go out to the children—who I know all—and our prayers are with you at this time.

And to Father Hollis on the passing of his wife, Janice Hollis. And as the former speaker before the last speaker indicated, Ms. Hollis was not Bermudian by birth, but came here many, many years ago with her husband as he led out in the Sandys community at St. James Church. And she shared in his commitment in serving the Sandys community in his capacity and we all are saddened by her loss.

With those couple of remarks, we will now move on.

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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: We have two Bills that will be introduced at this time, and I believe adjustments are being made for a later Bill to be introduced under the suspension of the [Standing Orders].

But the two Bills that are on the Order Paper will be introduced at this time.

I call on the Deputy Premier to introduce your Bill.

BILL**FIRST READING****DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

I am introducing the following Bill for the first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the [Development] and Planning Amendment Act 2021.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

And the next Bill at this time is in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister of Finance.

BILL**FIRST READING****PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION
AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT
AND VALIDATION ACT 2021**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The first item for today is the second reading of the Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill entitled the Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL**SECOND READING****DEBT COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the second reading of the Bill entitled Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021. The [purpose] of the following proposed Bill is to:

1. exempt debt collectors licensed under the [Debt Collection Act 2018](#) in the year 2020 from providing the Debt Collection Authority with audited annual financial statements for the year 2020; and
2. empower the Minister to extend the date of submission by debt collectors of audited financial statements to the Debt Collection Authority by a period not exceeding six months.

Mr. Speaker, the [2018] Act, specifically under section 15(6), requires annual auditing of the debt collection business trust accounts and filing of the audited financial statements with the Authority. Because of the COVID-19 shelter in place, licences were not issued until the third and fourth quarters of 2020. Under the current Act, debt collection businesses would be required to produce audited financial statements for the partial year 2020 and, in some instances, for only three months of 2020. And they were only licensed for a period of time in 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment proposes to waive the production of audited financial statements for debt collection business trust accounts for 2020 for any debt collection business licensed in 2020. They will now be required to produce audited financial statements for their trust accounts for 2021 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Speaker, currently the Act allows for an extension of time for filing audited trust account financial statements until April 30. The amendment proposes to allow extensions of time for filing to be extended through June 30 of each year to allow for the production and auditing of the financial statements.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Rent Commissioner, Ms. Karen Marshall, and the team in her office who drafted the legislation. Certainly, I would like to thank Ms. Gwen Johnson, Parliamentary Counsel, and Lovette Tannock, Parliamentary Counsel (attached with the Attorney General's Chambers).

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Deputy Premier and Honourable Minister for his brief presentation to the House.

This is a slightly odd bit of legislation in that it seeks to amend a primary Bill that we debated and put into place in 2018, which is the Debt Collection Act 2018. And that was the Government's initiative to try to tackle and, indeed, I think they described it as levelling the playing field for creditors and debtors. But they put in a series of requirements to try to regulate this area. That came into force, I believe in 2019 or thereabouts, and then we have had some substantive regulations that came in place in 2020. So, that is the background to this amendment.

What is slightly odd, from our perspective—and we would welcome the explanation from the Honourable Minister—is why it would be that where best practice requires the provision of audited accounts, and where that was thought to be best practice by this Government when it enacted the 2018 legislation and subsequent regulations, why would we now depart from best practice?

Now, one obvious answer to my question might be, *Well, it was COVID-19, it was 2020, there was not a lot of debt collection.* Another answer, potentially, is the one we just heard from the Honourable Minister just now in his brief to the House, which was that there was only third and fourth quarter accounts relevant to the year 2020. However, neither of those answers really explains why you would waive the need for audited accounts. It might explain why you would delay the need for audited accounts, why you would recognise that, like any other business, a debt collector might be behind on having their accounts audited because they are dealing with Zoom hearings with their auditors, or whatever other difficulties businesses are currently going through by reason of the pandemic. But, again, that does not really explain why one would waive the need to comply with the legislation and waive the need to comply with best practice.

And, Mr. Speaker, it does help if we just look, I think briefly, at section 15 of the primary Act. Section 15 is the section being amended by this amending Act, and section 15 places various obligations on a debt collector, including by section 15(1) a requirement that a debt collector shall open and maintain separate trust accounts for the money collected. So,

the best practice in section 15 of the previous Act in 2018 envisaged that we would ring-fence collected monies from the regular business monies of the debt collector and that would be something that would be obviously apparent, for example, from any accounts produced in 2020.

There is also a requirement under section 15 that a settlement of account should be provided by the debt collector—this is section 15(3)—and that should be provided every month. So, there should be a constant stream of information coming from the debt collector forward to show what is happening. It also gives the right to the Authority to go in and examine the accounting records. And I would be grateful to hear from the Minister about the Authority to the extent that this is happening or if that happened.

And we are not just raising these questions in a vacuum. This is an entity which was, as this House knows and as has been reported in the press, for a period unlicensed, despite being required to be licensed. And so, there is a bit of a track record here with at least one red flag. And, therefore, when something is being done which denies proper oversight and scrutiny . . . and I say “denies,” because it is not just delaying it, it is actually exempting; it is waiving the obligation. You know, that does not seem like the best approach in respect of a business about which there are already some public questions about their procedures.

Again, I am not suggesting anything untoward; I am just asking why it is that we are embarking down a waiver rather than a mere delay. And I am suggesting that the two obvious explanations—being COVID-19 and the fact that they only had third and fourth quarter accounts—neither of those really is a satisfactory explanation to why we would cease to have oversight for the 2020 period or half-year period.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I suppose I would ask this: Is the Honourable Minister confident that if the 2020 accounts were supplied by the debt collector, that all of the requirements of section 15 have been met? Because, of course, that is the potential prejudice here. It is whether or not all the things they ought to have been doing were done. And so, it would be helpful, given the flow of information should have been on a monthly basis pursuant to section 15(3), we would invite the Honourable Minister just to share with this House whether or not he is confident if the 2020 accounts, or a portion thereof, were shared by the debt collectors as they should be, whether there would be any potential breaches there.

So, with those brief remarks, we look forward just to the Honourable Minister's responses to those issues. Again, in summary, why a waiver rather than a delay? Secondly, what is the current status on the licensing issue of this entity? And third, and finally, is the Minister confident that if we had 2020 accounts, if they were not being waived, that everything would be tickety-boo and above board?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There are none.
Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will briefly address the comments made by the Honourable Member in relation to this particular piece of legislation, the Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021.

I will draw the Honourable Member's attention to section 8 of the principal Act, Application for licence. And I will draw the Honourable Member to section 8(2)(i) which requires, upon application, a statement of the applicant's accounts from the financial year *preceding* the application. One of the things I said in my Statement—and I know my Statement was only a couple of pages, so the Honourable Member should have remembered everything that I said—is that some of the applicants only concluded their application process to be licensed as a proper business under the [INAUDIBLE] in 2020.

So, because of that, and our effort is to provide a level of equity in treatment under this legislation, there are some whose debt collection applications were submitted much earlier, but there are some who did not complete the process due to a variety of reasons until 2020. We were in the midst of COVID-19 in 2020. The ability for businesses to operate during that time was certainly difficult, to be mild in my description, Mr. Speaker.

So, this particular provision has been brought into place to account for all of that, and irrespective of the position of the company, of when it actually completed its application and was licensed. In bringing the whole experience into context, the decision was made to extend the period upon which they are required to file their audited financial statements taking all of that into account.

Certainly, I would be surprised if the Honourable Member would not agree that in light of the circumstances of many businesses over the last 15 months, a level of sensitivity, a level of understanding, a level of care, and a level of a broader and more (I would say) tender attitude towards the condition of business is prudent at this time. This is an example of how this Government is trying to treat the overall business community at this time.

Certainly, we understand and do not shy away from the requirement that audited financial statements are a proper responsibility in the course of business—not only for debt collection businesses, but for many businesses in this country where it is statutorily required—but we are deploying a level of sensitivity, a level of understanding, a level of care so that these

businesses can, having had to deal with very unstable and unpredictable conditions, still meet their responsibilities.

And so, this particular provision, taking all that I have said into account, is why this has been done. We think it is reasonable and appropriate to give this extension. They are not going to have to forego giving audited statements; they are given more time to prepare their statements. And certainly, the activities of whatever period it was in 2020, will certainly be accounted for in those audited statements as well at some point.

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

Hon. Walter H. Roban: So, with that Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —I am—

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

The Speaker: There is a point of order. Let us take a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, the Honourable Minister has twice now said that they are granting an “extension” and I believe he is misleading the House, although perhaps unintentionally.

The language of the amendment contains an “exemption”—that is [clause] 2 [inserting new section 15(6A)—it is exempt from providing. So, could the Honourable Minister clarify? Because otherwise it sounds as if it is an extension, not an exemption.

Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, did you hear the point of order?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, I heard the point of order.

If the Honourable Member wants to play semantics with words, that is fine, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the preciseness of the language used in the amending Act, but essentially, we are giving them more time because of the limited time many were in operation to prepare financial statements.

I do not actually believe that there is that much of an issue between exemption—in this case—and extension. They are being given more time to prepare statements which, if you look at the cost related with preparing statements, they will probably be spending the same amount of money for preparing statements for three months or a quarter of a year as

they would spend for a full year. So, we are trying to, again, as I have said, and I will repeat it again, Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Member, I guess, he likes the semantics of words, is being understanding, trying to be . . . appreciate the conditions that many businesses have had to face—

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

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —we are legally creating an opportunity for them to deal with the situation in an easier way.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

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

The Honourable Minister is misleading the House. I am not dealing with semantics of words. There is a fundamental difference between exempting someone from having to do something, which means they do not have to do it, and extending the time for someone to do something, which means they have to do it, albeit at a later date.

If the Honourable Minister is saying that 2020 accounts will be provided from all debt collectors, notwithstanding the word “exempted” in the amending Act, then I would be grateful for that clarification to the House and the point can fall away.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, again, Mr. Speaker, I am only going to deal with this point here because I would like to move on and make sure this Bill is properly handled.

Certainly the Honourable Member who is learned and perhaps understands company matters, understands that even though they are being *exempted* from their reporting of their audited statements for 2020 and they will do the audited statements for 2021, an auditor is likely to want to see the financial activities for 2020 in any event, so that the statements will be comprehensive and complete, irrespective of the time or the activity of that period. That is likely to be a requirement of the auditing process in any event.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I have dealt with this matter adequately. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I ask now that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 2:29 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

DEBT COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Roban, you have the floor.

[Pause]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Hello, Mr. Chairman, sorry for that minor delay.

The Chairman: Yes, continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: If you will oblige, Mr. Chairman, may I begin my presentation in the clause by clause?

The Chairman: Certainly.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, the Bill seeks to amend the Debt Collection Act 2018 to exempt debt collectors licensed under the Act in the year 2020 from the requirement to submit their audited annual financial statements for the year 2020 to the Debt Collection Authority.

The Bill will further provide power for the Minister to extend debt collectors’ date of submission—and I will repeat that sentence, Mr. Chairman, because somebody seems to have a problem with the word “extend.” The Bill further provides power for the Minister to *extend* the debt collectors’ date of submission of audited annual financial statements to the Debt Collection Authority by a period not exceeding six months.

Clause 1, Mr. Chairman, provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 15 of the Debt Collection Act 2018 to exempt debt collectors licensed under the Act in the year 2020 from providing the Debt Collection Authority with audited annual financial statements for the year 2020. The Bill further provides the power for the Minister to extend debt collectors’ date of submission of audited annual financial statements to the Debt Collection Authority by a period not exceeding six months.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.
Are there any further speakers?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Nothing from me, Mr. Chairman.
Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Pearman.
Minister, do you want to finish, continue?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman.
May I now move the appropriate clauses?

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I would like to move the clauses of the Bill, clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Clauses 1 and 2 are approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. 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 appear to be none.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.
Thank you, Honourable Minister and all.

[Motion carried: The Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 2:33 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

DEBT COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.
The Bill has been reported as printed.
Thank you, Members.
That brings us to a conclusion of that item.
We now move on to next item, which is the Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Education.
Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Bill entitled Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 now be read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
There are none.
Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to this House a short Bill entitled the Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

The Bill proposes minor amendments to the Education Act 1996 focused solely on the Board of Education, otherwise known as “the Board.” These changes are transitional in nature and are needed to further improve the operations of the Board as the Government and Ministry of Education move towards the introduction of an Education Authority to help govern our public education system.

To give some background, 2008 was the last time amendments were made regarding the Board of Education. Honourable Members who were in the House at that time may recall that, prior to the 2008 amendments governance of the Board was quite different than what it is now. As per section 3 of the Education Act, as passed in 1996, members of the Board numbered not less than 5 and no more than 11.

There were no specific requirements for particular groups or interests to be represented as is now the case. Appointees were at the pleasure of the Minister and on one-year terms. Terms now range from one to three years to ensure that they are staggered and members can be reappointed. There was a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman—both appointed by the Minister. At present, a Deputy Chairman can be appointed from time to time by the Board amongst its members. And lastly, the Minister was empowered to chair and preside over any meeting as if he or she was the Chairman. This is no longer the case as the

Chairman presides and runs each board meeting. And, according to section 4 of the Act passed in 1996, the Minister was able to consult or take advice from the Board on any matter and act in his or her discretion on any matter. And the Board had such other functions and duties as assigned to it by the Education Act or any other enactment.

It should be noted that between 1996 and 2008 the Education Act prescribed no specific functions for the Board. However, the Board did make recommendations to the Minister for the Bermuda Government Scholars as per the Bermuda Government Scholarships Act 1958, which has since been amended.

The changes introduced in 2008 modernised the governance structure of the Board by prescribing the membership and ensuring that it undertook specific and substantive functions to support the Bermuda public school system.

Mr. Speaker, more recently the Board has played an important role in carrying out its most critical functions, that being the development of Plan 2022, Bermuda's strategic plan for public school education. This work began under the previous Government and was completed under my tenure. Consistent with the Government's commitment to move from a three-tier to a two-tier system, phase out middle schools and introduce signature schools, Plan 2022 provides a number of priorities and strategies that are being delivered as part of education reform.

Since my time as the Minister, I am pleased that the Board has continued to improve its operations. It has also been diligent in keeping up with an increased workload as there is so much more to do regarding education reform. They have, for example, established a number of working committees and produced a significant body of work as a part-time Board. The current committees of the Board are as follows:

- Curriculum and Assessment Committee;
- Student Services Committee;
- Finance and Operations Committee;
- Policy and Research Committee;
- Human Resources Committee;
- Technology Committee; and
- Scholarship and Awards Committee.

The Board, with the support of its committees, now has a term of reference and work plan for the delivery of the Board's priorities and responsibilities, a structured orientation process for new members, and job descriptions to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of Board members.

The Board has also developed a number of policy recommendations, such as, a tiered licence structure for educators, including a proposed designation for Master Teachers; and increased pathways for persons entering the teaching profession, especially in the areas of critical need. The recently adopted Teacher Certification Bonded Loan to help fund a teacher practicum was introduced following recom-

mendations by the Board. The absence of a paid practical [INAUDIBLE] to following non-traditional pathways by entering a teacher programme as a second career or who must work during the programme to sustain themselves and their family financially as they complete the requirements for teaching certification.

The Board continues to undertake its longest standing responsibility regarding Bermuda Government Scholars and has dedicated itself to ensure that the recommended scholars reflect the potential of the Board and diverse young scholars within our community.

Mr. Speaker, these are but a few examples of the efforts undertaken by the Board to improve its governance and operations. However, these proposed amendments will further assist the Board with its functions, including its role in assisting the Minister in development of an Education Authority. Specifically, the Bill proposes to:

(1) Allow the Permanent Secretary [PS] of the Ministry of Education to attend and participate in meetings of the Board. The Permanent Secretary works under the direction of the Minister of Education and is the supervisor of the Commissioner of Education. However, the Act does not provide for the Permanent Secretary to attend and participate in the proceedings of the Board. This is an anomaly as the Commissioner of Education and a person chosen by the Bermuda College are entitled to attend and take part in the proceedings. The participation of the Permanent Secretary in the proceedings of the Board is necessary in order to supervise the Commissioner, who has statutory responsibilities regarding the Board; and to provide a link between the Board, the Commissioner and the Minister. The Permanent Secretary also brings considerable knowledge about the workings of government and the priorities and can provide technical and other advice to the Board.

(2) The Board also proposes to establish a position of Deputy Chairperson, appointed by the Minister. The Act is prescriptive as to who serves on the Board, with the Chairman being appointed from the membership by the Minister. There currently is not a position for an established Deputy Chairperson to exist and share the workload of the Chairperson. Currently, the Board may, from time to time, appoint a member of the Board to serve as a Deputy Chairperson. However, the work of the Board would benefit from a fixed appointment for a Deputy Chairperson. A Deputy Chairperson will provide consistent support to the Chairman and preside over meetings in his or her absence. It should be noted that the Minister already appoints the members of the Board and is not removing or taking away any existing power from the Board. The amendment is proposed to enhance and improve the Board's functions and ensure that the Chairman is provided needed assistance to carry out significant, albeit, part-time, responsibilities.

(3) Additionally, the Board proposes to remove the Board's function to make recommendations to the Public Service Commission (PSC) regarding the appointment of directors of the Department of Education and principals. Responsibility for making recommendations to the PSC regarding the appointment of directors of the department and principals is proposed to revert to the Commissioner of Education, who is the head of the department. This change will remove the onerous and time-consuming responsibility for recruitment for directors and principals from the Board to allow them to focus on other functions. While recruitment for the post of Commissioner of Education is a weighty and time-consuming process, the responsibility for making recommendations to the PSC for the appointment of the Commissioner of Education is being left with the Board in order to ensure that stakeholders of the Bermuda public school system and the Board continue to be involved in the decision-making process for leadership of the Department of Education.

Mr. Speaker, with those remarks, I now present the Bill entitled Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 and welcome comments from other Honourable Members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to.

The Speaker: MP Jackson, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if this is a strange request, but could the Minister just repeat the last couple of sentences of his brief?

The Speaker: Yes, let me assist you.

Minister, there was a problem. You were fading out towards the end and we were struggling to hear some of those last pieces of it. So, if you would just—to assist—if you could repeat it?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. I will start from the third amendment. Is that fine or is there something else?

The Speaker: That is fine.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: From the third amendment.

To remove the Board's function to make recommendations to the Public Service Commission (PSC) regarding the appointment of directors of the Department of Education and principals. Responsibility for making recommendations to the PSC regarding the appointment of directors of the department and

principals is proposed to revert to the Commissioner of Education, who is the head of the department. This change will remove the onerous and time-consuming responsibility for recruitment for directors and principals from the Board to allow them to focus on other functions. While recruitment for the post of Commissioner of Education is a weighty and time-consuming process, the responsibility for making recommendations to the PSC for the appointment of the Commissioner is being left with the Board in order to ensure that stakeholders of the Bermuda public school system, as represented on the Board, continue to be—

The Speaker: We lost you again there, Minister. We lost you altogether.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: [INAUDIBLE]

The Speaker: Maybe if you cut your video off . . . if you cut your video off, it may help strengthen your broadband.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. Can you hear me now?

The Speaker: Yes, we can hear you. Go ahead.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay, sorry.

So, do you want me to read that part again?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Just that last—

The Speaker: Just that very last line, that very last line you were on there.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. I said, this change will remove the onerous and time-consuming responsibilities for recruitment for directors and principals from the Board to allow them to focus on other functions. While recruitment for the post of Commissioner of Education is a weighty and time-consuming process, the responsibility for making recommendations to the PSC for the appointment of the Commissioner of Education is being left with the Board in order to ensure that stakeholders of the Bermuda public school system, as represented on the Board, continue to be involved in the decision-making process for leadership of the Department of Education.

Were you able to hear that?

The Speaker: Yes, thank you, Minister.

MP Jackson, was that helpful?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, thank you very much.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to go ahead and do your presentation?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, yes, thank you, Minister for that presentation. It certainly gave some further explanation to the amendments that are on the table for today. But I do have a couple of questions that I would like to present today in hopes that we might be able to work on some clarification.

When we think about the entire structure of the Board of Education and the relationship with the Public Service Commission, I just want to throw it out, to just ask the question about whether this ultimately is our best strategy or our best way of getting the strategic planning for the education system, the hiring of the executive members, such as the Commissioner and principals and directors, and just whether this is the best structure.

When I read through some of the historical documents, the original legislation, et cetera, I just cannot help but wonder—and this is just food for thought—whether we are not dealing with some structures that may just overall not be working well for us in the 21st century. And I am just throwing that out there. And I also would like to just throw out for food for thought whether the procedures around the hiring and the making of recommendations to the Public Service Commission is being carried out in a way that really acknowledges and recognises and is transparent for the general public who may be kind of keeping track of this.

So, I am going to sort of start with some of the easier pieces here. Certainly, there is an amendment on this today that, you know, basically, is making sure that everybody declares any interests, that the Board is completely aware that they must step up and disclose any conflicts when in discussions within the Board. And [I have] no problems with that.

And also, the idea that removing what I could imagine would be a pretty onerous role of having to go through the hiring of directors and principals for a Board that is comprised of a number of people that have other external responsibilities aside from education, [which] would become a bit overwhelming and I would imagine that sometimes [it is] a very slow process, especially when we are facing deadlines and timelines as far as the commencement of school, et cetera. So, certainly, putting those in the hands of the Commissioner to proceed with the hiring or making recommendations for directors and principals is a good thing.

But I do want to just take note of the Permanent Secretary role. And I am looking at the role. This is not about anything that has to do with personalities or anything. This is the role of the Permanent Secretary. But my interpretation of that, Mr. Speaker, is that the Permanent Secretary is ultimately the CEO—this is the head chief in charge—and that role does deserve to be in the room. I can certainly understand why. That role, [the Permanent Secretary] has subject matter expertise and, as the Minister has stated, is a very clear liaison between the Commissioner of Edu-

cation and the Minister. And so, the Permanent Secretary role being a part of the Board of Education—without any vote—there is no vote involved, but as a subject matter expert is what I would see as being a positive contribution to the Board overall.

Now, as far as the Permanent Secretary role feeling as though there is undue influence, to me, reverts back to what my first thought was around *is this really working for us?* The Permanent Secretary role right now, the way it appears, especially in the public domain, is that like the PS role is having to go behind the scenes and it as if they are . . . that this role is making influence, et cetera, and I am inclined to suggest that why isn't the PS role acknowledged and validated for what the role responsibility actually is?

So, as I look at the procedure of, let us say, making recommendation for the hiring of a Commissioner, and that Commissioner—now, remember, the Permanent Secretary's role is to supervise the Commissioner of Education, so that PS role has, in my opinion, should have valid reason for having an opportunity to be a part of that application process. So, as I understand it, and the Minister may correct me if I am completely off base, but if—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Just a point of clarity, MP Jackson.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The point of clarity is the Permanent Secretary—

The Speaker: MP, allow the Minister to just clarify that for you.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I just wanted to clarify that the Permanent Secretary does play a very prominent role in the hiring of the Commissioner of Education, as that would be the direct manager of the Commissioner. And part of the PSC interview rules—and I am going strictly by memory—is that the direct line manager has to be in the room when those interviews are conducted. So, the Permanent Secretary does have a very prominent role in the process of appointing a Commissioner.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Continue, MP.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Minister. And thank you, Minister, for validating what it is that . . . my point that I am trying to get across.

So, if the Permanent Secretary is involved from, you know, the job description and the actual hiring to the shortlisting to the transition into the Board of Education for interviewing, and being a source as a

subject matter expert within the Board to prepare the Board for recommendation of the likes of the position of the Commissioner of Education to the Public Service Commission, that this should be known, that this should be transparent, that this is what it is and that this role is the superior executive position in that exercise.

Because sometimes, I believe that we have certainly, historically, run into roadblocks, which I am not going to go into any detail, but there have been some real challenges hiring and just kind of going through the flow of the process of former Commissioners of Education, and I believe that if there was more structure and transparency and public acknowledgement and public awareness of the Permanent Secretary role and the role that it plays in the selection and the recommendations of Commissioners of Education, then it would provide . . . it just would make everybody aware of what the circumstances are and it may alleviate some of the challenges that we have had in the past.

My goodness, we go all the way back to like 2013 and we have had just a series of unfortunate events when it comes to Commissioners of Education. And I just cannot help but think that if the Permanent Secretary role is validated as being that supervisor that does have a hand in the selection and the preparation for recommendations for the Commissioner of Education, that it would help to eliminate some of the confusion that we have seen in the past.

My second point is around the choice of a Deputy Chair. So, yes, absolutely, the Board of Education—the entire Board—is appointed by the Minister. The Board itself spends an awful lot of time—and absolute credit should be given to the Board of Education for the work that has been done around the strategic planning, around the vision for education in Bermuda and a number of initiatives that the Minister has already stated—but that there is difficulty swallowing the fact that the Board of Education does not even have the opportunity with this amendment to select their own Deputy Chair. And, you know, to be honest, we can understand that. As the Minister stated, you have got to get the job done. If the Minister chooses to put somebody in there that they know there is going to be some consistent support for the Chair, et cetera, it is what it is.

But it does start to get really homogeneous, Mr. Speaker. And so, you know, for those naysayers out there in the world who might say, *Well, you know, the entire Board of Education is appointed by the Minister. The Minister gets to appoint the Deputy Chair. There is just absolutely . . . everybody there is going to be in agreement with whatever the Minister—and I would suspect, to a certain extent, the Permanent Secretary role—that everybody has got to be thinking on the same thought waves and where is the diversity of thought? Where is the brainstorming of new ideas, et cetera, if it is a band of people that are predomi-*

nantly thinking group thought? Just throwing it out there, because if there is something that the Minister wants to get done, if there is something that is developed by the Permanent Secretary role that wants to get done, then there are a group of people that are there that have been hand-picked by the Minister to get through whatever the Minister wants to get through. And so, that is a public perception. It is what it is.

Which brings me back to, yes, I do not know, is this the right way for us? How long has the Board of Education been in place? Is that even the right structure for us moving forward in the future? Maybe even looking at the fact that this could become a very specialised group and looking at specifics around strategy and vision versus things like going through interview processes for Commissioners of Education and the like. Maybe even the recommendation of the Commissioner of Education should be something where the recommendation is something that the Board does not have to worry about anymore and we can find another way to make that recommendation from application in the HR to the Public Service Commission. These are just ideas that I throw out. It is not easy to shift things. And what a new organisation would look like might be a real challenge right now, especially since we have been doing this the same way for so long.

Which brings me to the conclusion of my message today, and that is exactly what the Minister began his brief with—the independent Education Authority. That, to me, has the opportunity to really put some—I am just going to just sort of say—corporate executive structure around what all of these different pieces might look like. So, if we are able to bring in the HR, we are able to really recognise and acknowledge the Permanent Secretary role as, you know, the chief executive in the process, to bring in the Minister where the Minister needs to be, bring in the Board of Education, maybe all different names, different places and stages, but within an *independent* Education Authority, many of these projects and processes and procedures can be done independently. And the Minister can worry about things that are, you know, at a more global level as far as the Ministry is concerned, that it takes a lot of the stress of the practical and procedural day-to-day running, like the hiring of Commissioners of Education, out of the hands of what could be considered a Board that should maybe be spending more of their time on strategic planning, et cetera.

So, in summary and to end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that, yes, right now it does feel as though there is a lot of, sort of groupthink and that there is the potential for a lot of homogeneous thinking within the Board, with the Minister appointing every single person within the Board now.

And certainly, having the Permanent Secretary role as a part of the Board of Education, without a

vote, but as the subject matter expertise, and then making sure that all Board members declare any interest is certainly a positive and transparent exercise.

And so, with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts and I look forward to the Minister concluding the debate.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jason Wade: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Wade?

Mr. Jason Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: You have the floor.

Mr. Jason Wade: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you allowing me to speak on this today. I will keep it brief, Mr. Speaker, as I only have a few comments that I would like to make in regard to this.

Mr. Speaker, it has become very evident to me, and to many of the public, that the One Bermuda Alliance and the *Royal Gazette* have a vendetta to achieve. They want this to be made public that there is a power grab that is up for stakes.

Mr. Speaker, that is the furthest from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has sat on the Board of Education for six years now, it has become very evident that the OBA would like the public to believe that the Minister is doing a power grab by making these changes.

Mr. Speaker, that is the furthest from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very evident to the public that this is not the intention of the Minister. This is not the intention of the Board of Education to just be some fluff Board. That is what, if you read the articles in the *Royal Gazette* by the One Bermuda Alliance—

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jason Wade: —and from the—

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Point of order.

Mr. Jason Wade: Sure. Sure.

The Speaker: There is a point of order, just a minute. We take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make sure the Member is not misleading the House. Certainly, that was not the in-

tent that this would be some sort of power grab and the like. I am just simply stating that with the Minister appointing every member of the Board of Education there is the potential for group thinking, that everyone may be in agreement and it may just reduce the opportunity for brainstorming or other thoughts and suggestions outside of the group thought and the mainstream agenda.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you for your clarifying your point of view.

MP, just be mindful of what the Member has just indicated.

Mr. Jason Wade: I appreciate it. Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the ultimate goal is to have an Education Authority in place. That is the ultimate goal. That is what this Government is moving towards. All right?

In order to get that Education Authority in place, Mr. Speaker, tweaks have to be made to the Board's operations to ensure efficiency. That is what has to happen, Mr. Speaker.

So, I am glad that the Member of the Opposition said that this was not the case, that was not what they were looking forward to do, and I can appreciate that. But I just thought I would chime in on that point in that, Mr. Speaker, we need the Education Authority to come to fruition. That is our goal. Ultimately, in order for that goal to come into place, these are the tweaks that need to take place in order for us to reach that goal.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will end on that. I just wanted to bring clarity to that. I wanted to make sure that the Opposition and the *Royal Gazette* . . . sorry, both are the same. But I just wanted to make sure that we were clear on our goal of bringing the Education Authority to fruition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

There are none.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, can you hear me clearly? I kept my video off.

The Speaker: Yes, I will allow you to continue without the video so we can get a better reception on your audio.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. I just want to thank MP Wade and MP Jackson for their contributions there.

One thing was a bit odd. MP Jackson mentioned that the amendment had members declare their personal interests up front, and that actually is not part of this amendment, although there is a form that we use with the Board for them to make those declarations. But I just wanted to clarify that because she did mention it and I was unsure where that part actually did come from.

I also want to touch on something that I do agree with MP Jackson on, and MP Wade touched on it, and that is that we do not agree that this is the best structure for the Board, but it is what we have now. And so we are making the tweaks to make it work better as we move toward the ultimate goal. And that is having an Education Authority. That group is working very diligently on what that should look like and has made some recommendations, and we are in discussion talking about how we can move forward with that in the future.

But these changes are being made to modify the Board of Education so it can work more efficiently than how it has worked before. We have recognised that there are some things that can bog it down and make it not work as well.

The other thing that I did want to touch on, and MP Jackson did speak to, is about being more transparent and getting people to understand how these things really happen. And that is really, really critically important. One of the things that shocked me when I became the Minister of Education is how much people—and I am talking about . . . I am not just talking about the average Joe on the street, I am talking about our politicians, even our educators—do not understand how the Government works, and in this particular case, how departments work, such as the Department of Education, and the difference between the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education.

And I do agree with her. If people took time, especially Members who sit within these honourable Chambers, to actually ask those questions, find out how it is, and then when they are talking to their constituents they can give an accurate portrayal on how this stuff actually works, we would not have things being said or persons walking around saying completely erroneous things that actually do not even correlate to what is going on.

So, I go back to what she mentioned about the Permanent Secretary and the role of hiring the Commissioner of Education. That is not unique to the Department of Education. That is how every Permanent Secretary operates within the government departments. The Permanent Secretary is part and parcel of the hiring of department heads—period. There is no need to explain. There are no special circumstances in the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education. Every Ministry goes through that process when it comes to department heads. The Permanent Secretary, who is the direct manager of the

department heads, is the one who is involved in the hiring process—period.

So, now that we have clarified that . . . and they are responsible for making the ultimate recommendation to the PSC for department heads. And that is how it works. So to say that we should be more clear on how that process works, et cetera, et cetera, I get it. I understand that if people do not get that—especially Members who are, you know, running the Government and want to be the Government do not understand that—then we do have a real issue that we need to work with on how we can move past that so that we can get past that part of the confusion.

I also wanted to clarify one more thing for MP Jackson. There are 15 members of the Board, [and] although the Minister technically appoints all 15 members, 6 of those members the Minister has no say in who they are. So, to say that we are consolidating everybody who thinks the same, and the like, that is not how it works and it is not how we want the Board of Education to work.

The Board of Education is built of very strong-willed persons who give their time because, trust me, they do not get paid anything in relation to the amount of hours they put in and the policies that they research and submit. But those six members that I am talking about, four of them are nominees from our unions, and two of them are nominees from our two senior schools. And so, those nominees, I have no say in who those nominees are or who they can be. Whoever gets sent to me, I appoint to the Board. And so, [I say this] just to clarify that not all of the Board is appointed by the Minister or hand-picked by the Minister, as the implication would be.

And the rest of the members of the Board are actually via recommendation as well to the Minister. And so, while I do say pick between the ones that are recommended to me, in that case it is done that way so that we can assure that we get persons who actually want to be in those positions and not persons who are kind of pushed into it because that is something no one else wanted to do.

But I do agree with her that this is not the most perfect vehicle, but it is the vehicle we have now. When the Education Authority comes on board, there will be a completely different role for the Board of Education as I predict, and it will be something more akin along the lines of the public having more say in who gets to sit on those particular boards and things along those lines.

So, Mr. Speaker, before we move into Committee, I would like to really, really emphasise that these amendments, while they are small and require minimal changes to the Education Act, they will reap the dividends that we need in between this time and the move into the Education Authority.

So, with those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:11 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Education Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2021](#).

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I would like to move all four clauses.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Education Act 1996 as it relates to the Board of Education.

Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 3 of the principal Act to allow the Permanent Secretary to attend meetings of the Board and participate in its proceedings, but not to vote; and to allow the Minister to appoint a member of the Board to serve as its Deputy Chairman.

Clause 3 amends section 4 of the principal Act by deleting the words “directors of the department” and “principals” so that it is no longer a function of the Board to make recommendations to the Public Service Commission on the appointment of directors of the department and principals.

Clause 4 amends Schedule 1 regarding the Board of Education by repealing paragraph 4 which provides for members of the Board to appoint a Deputy Chairman, since the Deputy Chairman will now be appointed by the Minister. Paragraph 13 is amended, as a consequence of clause 2(b), which amends section 3(3) of the principal Act to ensure that the Permanent Secretary, Commissioner of Education, and a representative of the Bermuda College are required to disclose interests at meetings of the Board. This is consistent with the declarations of interests of members of the Board.

Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Minister, are you finished?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. And Mr. Chairman, I was just waiting . . . there are only four clauses.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: That is why I moved all four clauses.

The Chairman: That is fine. Thank you, Minister.
Are there any further speakers?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Any further speakers?
There appear to be none.
Minister, do you want to move your clauses?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 4 to be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill entitled Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill, the Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021, be reported to the House.
Are there any objections to that?
The Bill will be reported to the House.
Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Thank you, colleagues.

[Motion carried: The Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:15 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

It has been reported as printed.

That brings us to a close of that item. That now moves us on to the next item on the Order Paper for today which is the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Transport.

Minister?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 be read now the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The purpose of my statement today is to introduce a Bill designed to allow for the Operating Fund of the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority to be in interest-bearing bank accounts wherever possible, within or outside Bermuda; and to increase the time required to prepare a report after receiving the auditor's report from 30 days to 60 days.

Mr. Speaker, the [Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Act 2016](#) clarifies that the Authority should maintain Operating Funds in interest-bearing bank accounts in Bermuda. Currently, there are no banks in Bermuda that provide interest income on current accounts. Therefore, the Authority is unable to meet statutory requirements. Now, notwithstanding this, it should be noted that the Authority does utilise three-

month call accounts that are interest-bearing for funds that are not readily needed for operations.

Mr. Speaker, the Act also requires that the Authority's annual report be prepared within 30 days after receiving the auditor's report. The Authority has found that 30 days is not a commercially realistic timeframe to prepare, review and edit the annual report and then submit it to the Board and Office for the Auditor General for their review. They believe 60 days will give the Authority a more practical timeframe to get the annual report prepared, including the reports, the graphs, photos, content checked and edited and printed, considering that a fair amount of preparatory work is done in advance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My thanks to the Honourable Minister of Transport. He contacted me, together with the PS, about this Bill I think two, possibly three, weeks ago. And I am grateful that he took the trouble to do so. It is always refreshing when the Government is prepared to work with the Opposition, and I do sincerely appreciate that he was prepared to do that.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends the primary Act, which is the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Act 2016, and it amends it in two respects. One is it broadens the scope of bank accounts into which monies can be deposited in respect of the Operating Fund of the Authority, as distinct from the reserve fund of the Authority. It is the Operating Fund monies that are being dealt with here. And that is one thing it does.

And the second thing it does is to loosen an oversight requirement by deleting the 30-day period and substituting a 60-day period.

So, Mr. Speaker, dealing with those very, very briefly in the order in which they appear, my question to the Honourable Minister in respect of the bank account position, which is to allow for the monies to be placed in overseas bank accounts, rather than merely in Bermuda bank accounts, my question is simply this: Is this retrospective, this change, to correct an existing situation? Or is this merely forward-looking, anticipating, as the Minister's explanation was, that there is not an option here in Bermuda and anticipating that the monies will now need to be placed in an account overseas? And my second question on that point is has a decision been taken as yet by the Authority, or if the Minister is aware, as to where these funds will now be banked overseas?

And in respect of the second element, the change from 30 to 60 days, whilst we never like to see a loosening of oversight requirements, it is also a good idea that our laws are sensible and reflective of what actually happens in practice. And where it does actually take 60 days to accomplish these obligations, as the Minister has said that it does, then we can readily understand why changing 30 to 60 [days] makes sense. We do not want those who are carrying out statutory obligations to be in breach, even if a technical breach, merely because the time limit period was overly onerous. I do not think any great prejudice will be caused to oversight by extending from 30 to 60 days.

And so, subject to the two questions posed in respect to the bank accounts, that is all that the Opposition has to say about the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Tyrrell, yes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be very, very brief. I think the Opposition have indicated support for this, the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Bill, because they are two common sense housekeeping amendments in the interests of efficiency.

So, I certainly support and thank the Minister and his technical officers for bringing this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Is there any Member who wishes to make a contribution?

There are none.
Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just in answering the Opposition's questions, this Act will be looking forward. So, it is not retroactive, it is looking forward and it will take effect as soon as it gets put into effect.

And when it comes to the—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, with apologies, I am having a great deal of difficulty hearing the Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, can you adjust your audio?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I can try. How is this? Is this better?

The Speaker: Yes, if you could get closer to your microphone it would be good.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, I am as close as I can get.

Mr. Scott Pearman: That is much better. Thank you, Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Okay, no problem.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: So, this, in answer to the first question, this is not retroactive, it is a Bill that will only take effect when it goes into effect.

And the second question is that there is no intention that I am currently aware of to have the funds banked overseas, but we wanted to make sure that the Civil Aviation Authority was not painted into a corner and that they had the option to go overseas in interest-bearing accounts if they felt as though that was the best move for them. So, it was just making sure that we do not limit our options moving forward.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker? Here he comes.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Okay, sorry about that; I do not know what happened there.

The Speaker: No problem, Deputy. It is quite alright. Technology, we understand that. It causes a little hiccup now and then.

You have the floor.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:23 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BERMUDA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further considera-

tion of the Bill entitled [Bermuda Civil Authority Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister Scott, you have the floor.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to see if I can move all three clauses.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Act 2016 to allow for the Operating Fund of the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority to be in interest-bearing bank accounts wherever possible, within or outside Bermuda, and to increase the time required to prepare a report, after receiving the auditor's report, from 30 days to 60 days.

Clause 1 is the short title of the Bill to be introduced as Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021.

Clause 2 of the Bill amends section 17 of the principal Act to allow for the Operating Fund of the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority to be in interest-bearing bank accounts, wherever possible, within or outside Bermuda, subject to subsection (3), which provides for the Minister of Finance's approval and instructions in relation to overseas banks.

Clause 3 of the Bill amends section 20 of the principal Act to increase the number of days the Authority has to submit a report to the Minister responsible for civil aviation from 30 days to 60 days after receiving the auditor's report.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Nothing from me on behalf of the Opposition, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member. Minister, do you want to move those clauses?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move clauses 1 through 3.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved. Are there any objections to that? There appear to be none. Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Chairman, I would move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that? There appear to be none. The preamble is approved.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. 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 appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed. Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:36 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. Members, are there any objections to the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are no objections? The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, that brings us to an end of the items that were on the Order Paper for today.

However, before we move on to our third readings, Members, I am going to seek your indulgence to allow the Minister of Health to introduce an [Order] that she would like to have introduced today. Minister of Health.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

[Recommitted]

QUARANTINE (COVID-19) (NO. 3) AMENDMENT (NO. 3) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Quarantine (COVID-19) (No. 3) Amendment (No. 3) Order 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And that will be added to the Orders for the next sitting . . . or it has been tabled, rather, because that is a negative resolution, yes.

Thank you, Members.

Mr. Premier . . . sorry, before we go to Mr. Premier, Ministers, would you like to do your third readings?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I will call on the Minister Deputy Premier to do the first.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

DEBT COLLECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and is now passed.

Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Debt Collection Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Education, would you like to do your third reading?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, am I still clear enough to be heard?

The Speaker: Yes, we can hear you.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

EDUCATION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read for the third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and is now passed.

Thank you, Minister.

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

[Motion carried: The Education Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Transport, would you like to do your third reading?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, go ahead.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

**BERMUDA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY
AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, 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 its title only and is now passed.

Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Ministers.

Thank you, Members.

We are bringing the business of the day to a conclusion.

We now ask the Premier . . .

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, July 16, 2021.

The Speaker: The 16th. Thank you, Premier.

Does any Member wish to speak to that?

There are none.

Thank you.

The House now stands adjourned.

[Gavel]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak.

Mr. Speaker?

Hello, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: The House is adjourned.

The Speaker: I just adjourned the House. Everybody was moving slow.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I had my microphone on and I was speaking, but there was a little buffering going on.

The Speaker: Yes, I picked the gavel up and let the gavel go down. The gavel went down already.

An. Hon. Member: Have a good weekend, colleagues.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: All right, Mr. Speaker. I ask for a little bit of indulgence next time around for that.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Everyone have a good weekend.

Thank you. I appreciate an early day.

[At 3:30 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 16 July 2021.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING****16 JULY 2021****10:01 AM***Sitting Number 22 of the 2020/2021 Session*

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
Ms. Beale, would you represent us in prayer?

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.
Members, the House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 2 July 2021]

The Speaker: The Minutes from the 2nd of July have been circulated. Are there any amendments, adjustments required?

There are none. The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 2 July 2021 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: There are none.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: We have three [communications] this morning. The first is in the name of the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Minister Furbert, would you like to present your matter at this time? Minister Furbert?

[Pause]

The Speaker: We are going to move on.

Minister Hayward, would you like to present your paper or communication at this time?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

**EMPLOYMENT (PROBATIONARY PERIOD
EXEMPTION) REGULATIONS 2021**

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the [Honourable] House of Assembly the Employment (Probationary Period Exemption) Regulations 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next [communication] this morning is in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister of Health, would you like to present yours?

**PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY
EXTENSION (NO. 4) ORDER 2021**

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health and exercised in the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister Furbert, are you available?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

Apologies, Mr. Speaker, a bit of technical difficulty. Can you hear me?

The Speaker: We can hear you.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Hon-

ourable House of Assembly the Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
We move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have six Statements this morning. The first Statement is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. E. David Burt: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on financial support provided to Bermuda businesses through the Bermuda Economic Development—

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, Mr. Premier, one second. Your camera is on, but I think you need to adjust the item that is front of your camera.

Hon. E. David Burt: Ah.

The Speaker: There you go.

Hon. E. David Burt: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No problem at all.

Hon. E. David Burt: Shall I begin again?

The Speaker: We want to make sure we see that red-and-blue tie, see?

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I have a different red-and-blue tie for every day leading up to Cup Match.

The Speaker: There you go.

Hon. E. David Burt: And I will make sure they are all on display, especially for those persons who may be confused as to my affiliation due to some photoshopped pictures that are sneaking around the Internet.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Go right ahead now.

UPDATE ON SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LOCAL SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES SINCE THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on the financial support provided to Bermuda businesses through the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation [BEDC] since the declaration of the global pandemic. The BEDC is currently responsible for providing financial support and technical advice to small and medium-sized businesses, for overseeing the Economic Empowerment Zones [EEZs], for growing outside vendor markets, and for managing vendors and issuing vending licences. The organisation's key objective remains to assist the Government in encouraging economic growth for Bermuda's [local small and medium-sized businesses](#).

By no stretch of the imagination have the last 16 months been easy for either Bermuda or the world. The pandemic has wrought havoc on all aspects of civil society, and Bermuda's businesses have not been spared. However, Mr. Speaker, in order to address the debilitating impacts of the global pandemic on Bermuda's local small and medium-sized businesses, the BEDC had no choice but to pivot significantly to expand both its financial products and its advisory services so that local businesses had the best chance of successfully managing the new normal.

With support from the Government of Bermuda, the BEDC responded quickly and decisively with customised products and services aimed at helping businesses navigate the challenges presented by the impact of the coronavirus. As of today, the BEDC has deployed a total of \$4.4 million in funding to local small and medium-sized businesses since the onset of the global pandemic, and I will break down this financial support further. But before doing so, I think that it is important to provide an overview of the efforts of the BEDC since March 2020 in assisting our Island's entrepreneurs and business owners.

Mr. Speaker, on March 20, 2020, the BEDC announced that it would reallocate funds from its budget and also modify its existing products and services to be able to provide local business owners with support during the uncertain times with the onset of the pandemic. The raft of support mechanisms implemented is as follows:

1. BEDC reallocated \$350,000 from its existing operations/programmes to its capital budget to increase its capitalisation to \$2 million. This allowed for (a) an increase to \$1 million [50 per cent of capitalisation] in direct lending funds to assist businesses; and (b) an increase to \$12 million [6 times capitalisation] for issuing loan guarantees for [bank] financing.

2. BEDC reallocated \$100,000 from its existing budget to provide access to businesses to external expertise [support] in accounting, legal and marketing services (which supplemented BEDC's support and expertise) to assist in right-sizing businesses once COVID-19 passes.

3. BEDC facilitated the creation of an ideas pool where businesses could write in with recommendations and suggestions of how public authorities and departments could assist them.

4. BEDC amended its payment terms to pay all of its vendors on a weekly basis to ensure they were not waiting for payments to facilitate better cash flow.

5. BEDC acted as an intermediary connecting consumers/buyers with sellers as businesses had underused inventory.

6. BEDC facilitated businesses in forming partnerships, merging, sharing overhead with other businesses to reduce operating costs both during and once the COVID-19 pandemic passes.

7. BEDC increased its microloan offering from \$20,000 up to a maximum of \$30,000 per business with no security required. New microloan clients received a decrease in interest rates by 1.5 per cent to 3.0 per cent and 3.5 per cent for EEZ and non-EEZ businesses, [respectively]. The microloans were expanded to be used for both capital and working capital purposes.

8. All new and existing microloan clients had the option to structure/restructure their loans for a three to six months interest-only repayment periods based on need, then followed by principal and interest [P&I] payments.

9. Existing microloan clients had the option to extend their loan repayment terms from prior 9 to 24 months to up to 42 months if needed, which reduced their monthly payment amounts once the principal and interest phase of their loans commenced.

10. BEDC increased its guarantee to 75 per cent (from 65 per cent) of a bank loan up to a maximum of \$300,000 as a result of a new increased capitalisation [total] of \$2 million.

11. BEDC allowed its guarantee to be applied for the first time against lending from other entities, such as could be seen in the partnership with the Bermuda Credit Union Co-op Society.

12. BEDC immediately reduced application fees by 50 per cent for all of its products.

13. BEDC also immediately reduced its loan guarantee fees by 50 per cent.

14. BEDC decided to absorb the cost for credit checks, thereby eliminating this fee to the client.

15. Entrepreneurs who operated seasonal businesses had the option to have recurring interest-only periods for the life of their microloans.

16. All new approved microloans had the option to delay the first repayment date by two months—to be on the last business day of the month two

months after the month in which the first drawdown occurred. This applies to the interest-only option also.

17. BEDC increased the maximum credit line it guarantees for its Letter of Credit product for retailers from \$10,000 to \$12,500.

18. BEDC significantly expanded its seminar and webinar programming, as businesses needed access to business knowledge and best practice over the last 15 months to help right-size.

19. BEDC offered all of its seminars and webinars free of charge to all business owners and entrepreneurs who registered.

20. Registration fees for all of BEDC's multi-week courses were reduced by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken the time to set out in careful detail the actions taken on behalf of small and medium-sized businesses and of the extensive work the BEDC has [done] and continues to do to support them. Additionally, the BEDC also worked with the Ministry of Finance and other government departments to determine what other relief could be provided to support business owners through the pandemic. In April 2020 the BEDC further expanded the assistance it was able to provide to Bermuda's local small and medium-sized businesses.

Now the Corporation has been able to do the following:

- a. complete a jurisdictional review of other countries' support to SMEs to help inform Bermuda's support;
- b. complete a survey of local business needs;
- c. actively hold and participate in weekly webinars to assist local businesses and to connect them with each other;
- d. act as an intermediary between businesses and government departments for assistance and clarification when needed;
- e. continue its *Mind Your Business* radio show on Ocean 89 to engage and to inform local businesses;
- f. restructure its loan guarantees for the businesses who had bank financing, as needed;
- g. restructure the current BEDC direct microloans portfolio based on [the clients'] needs;
- h. respond to thousands of requests in emails, phone calls and social media platform questions for advice and direction;
- i. engage in numerous meetings and negotiations with the three banks to firm-up the new guaranteeing of overdrafts and progressing our shared concept of providing pre-approved lump sums of guarantees to the financial institutions in order to cut the processing times on business financing requests;
- j. compile and distribute to local businesses a list of all of the government departments who offered COVID-19 relief and assistance;

- k. compile and distribute to local businesses a list of all of the banks' COVID-19 reliefs and assistance;
- l. work with private sector entities such as the Bermuda Credit Union Co-op Society to develop additional financial products to support local small and medium-sized businesses to amplify what the BEDC, the Government and the banks were providing.

Mr. Speaker, through the Finance Ministry's additional \$12 million grant provided in 2020, the BEDC's efforts to assist local small and medium-sized enterprises with funding shortfall needs increased dramatically. We were determined to be understanding and responsive as a Government, and the additional grant support went a long way to assist local businesses to survive over these last 16 months. The additional \$12 million supplemented by the BEDC's \$1 million in direct lending and \$12 million in loan and overdraft guarantees, allowed the corporation to develop new and expanded financial products including the creation of the COVID-19 Business Sustainability and Continuity Funding Programme.

The relief funding programme consists of a portfolio of [the following] financing products for businesses to take advantage of:

1. BEDC COVID-19 loan/grant product;
2. BEDC microloan product;
3. BEDC debt consolidation microloan product;
4. BEDC loan guarantee product;
5. BEDC overdraft guarantee product; and the
6. BEDC COVID-19 emergency grant product.

Over the last 16 months, the BEDC has approved 255 applications, significantly outpacing approvals in a normal year, for a total of \$4.36 million to assist our local small and medium-sized business through a variety of financing options.

The breakdown of the funding approved to date is as follows:

- 50 general and debt consolidation microloans approved totalling \$1.1 million in loan funds disbursed;
- 117 COVID-19 combined loans and grants approved totalling \$2.4 million in funds disbursed, and \$1.1 million of this is the grant portion of this product with the remaining \$1.4 million being the loan portion;
- 5 loan guarantees have been approved, the majority with the Bermuda Credit Union Co-op Society totalling \$289,000 in guaranteed funds;
- 4 overdraft guarantees have been approved through the banks totalling \$152,000 in guaranteed funds; and finally, Mr. Speaker,
- 79 COVID-19 emergency grants have been approved totalling \$420,000 in grant funds disbursed.

Mr. Speaker, the Island's economic activity is expanding as a direct result of our effective manage-

ment of the coronavirus. Local businesses will still require financial assistance, and the need has expanded from just surviving with funding for immediate overhead and working capital needs as seen in the early days of the pandemic, to funding for pivoting, innovation, sustainability and growth needs. As such, businesses will have access to the funds from the COVID-19 Business Sustainability and Continuity Funding Programme, and it is anticipated that at least a further \$3 [million] to \$4 million in financial support will be deployed by the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, let me close by expressing my thanks to the entire team of the BEDC. The women and men working there have stayed true to their mission of doing all they can to assist small and medium-sized businesses. I must also recognise the able leadership of Ms. Erica Smith, who tirelessly champions the core values of the organisation. The BEDC team should be commended for their efforts. But ultimately, the priority has been to save as many local businesses over this challenging 16 months as possible. Although much progress has been made to assist businesses, further support will be needed. Accordingly, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House and the public that the BEDC will continue to provide COVID-19 funding support until March 31, 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

The next Statement this morning, Members, is from the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

OECD INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to update this Honourable House on the work of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [Committee] known as the [Inclusive Framework](#) on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting [the Inclusive Framework].

Mr. Speaker, the G20 commissioned the OECD to address Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (or BEPS) that had, in the view of the G20, increased because of the increased digitalisation of the global economy. In their opinion, this made it harder for the tax administrations of countries to collect corporate income tax within their proper jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, in March 2018 the Inclusive Framework, working through its Task Force on the Digital Economy [TFDE], issued its Tax Challenges Arising from Digitalisation—Interim Report 2018 [the Interim Report OECD, 2018 (2)], which recognised the need for a global solution. Work continued on this ini-

tiative, and in January 2019 members of the Inclusive Framework agreed to examine proposals in two pillars which could form the basis for a consensus solution to the tax challenges arising from digitalisation.

Mr. Speaker, Pillar One is focused on nexus and appropriate profit allocation, while the core aspect of Pillar Two relates to a global minimum corporate income tax intended to address remaining BEPS issues.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has been an active Inclusive Framework member, working toward an appropriate outcome which includes the essential elements in Pillar Two as initially outlined in the Inclusive Framework's thinking. This includes the notion that all jurisdictions should have the right to create tax systems which are appropriate for their economies, whether or not such tax system includes or does not include a corporate income tax.

Mr. Speaker, G7 leaders met in early June 2021 in the UK prior to the scheduled July 1 Inclusive Framework meeting. They agreed to a high-level Pillar Two framework, which included the establishment of a global minimum tax of at least 15 per cent to be applied on a country-by-country basis. The G7 urged the OECD and the steering group of the Inclusive Framework to endorse the G7 agreement and promote it to the members of the Inclusive Framework.

Mr. Speaker, on July 1, 2021, the Inclusive Framework met, and 130 of its 139 members supported the high-level Pillar Two framework agreed to by the G7 and set a timeline of October 2021 to create and finalise the technical details. Two of the outstanding nine members indicated their support in the days following the meeting. Therefore, 132 members currently support the July 1, 2021, Inclusive Framework Statement. Mr. Speaker, at the July 10, 2021, G20 Finance Ministers' meeting, all G20 ministers endorsed the July 1 Statement of the Inclusive Framework. This agreement now establishes the basis for [concluding] the outstanding technical discussions.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Pillar One, initial estimates conclude that approximately 80 multinational enterprises worldwide would qualify as *in-scope* of Pillar One for purposes of being subject to partial profit re-allocation under the terms of the agreement described in the Inclusive Framework public statement. The Pillar One agreements allow for an exclusion to apply to regulated financial services companies and certain natural resources companies. The details of these exclusions will be determined in the upcoming technical phase of the negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, it is on this technical phase, which will run from July to October, that all countries including Bermuda are now focused. Pillar Two will be central to our considerations. As we have in the past, the Ministry of Finance will continue to work closely with our industry stakeholders and other strategic partners to advocate for technical details that are in

Bermuda's interests and seek to enhance Bermuda's competitive position.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is important to reiterate certain key points of my press statement of July 2, 2021, the day following the publication of the Inclusive Framework Statement. These remarks reinforce Bermuda's position as a quality international financial centre that appropriately plays its part on the global stage, and I quote: "As a country committed to transparency, cooperation and high levels of compliance with international standards, the Government of Bermuda joined the Statement on a new framework for international taxation, arising from the OECD ('Inclusive Framework') meeting of July 1, 2021, and looks forward to supporting its ongoing technical discussions ahead of the meeting of G20 Finance Ministers meeting in October 2021. Bermuda has been actively involved in ongoing discussions relating to this initiative to present positions that reflect the national interest and that of our various stakeholders. As part of that approach, we recognised the need to join with other members of the Inclusive Framework to reach this position supported by a significant majority of the membership.

"We fully intend to remain an active participant in the ongoing work of the Inclusive Framework to complete the development of an appropriate plan. We have noted areas of concern at a technical and practical level, which we look forward to working to resolve constructively in the months ahead."

Mr. Speaker, we will press on to do the work that is required for continued success. You will recall that earlier this year the Government tabled legislation to embody the next Tax Reform Commission. This was approved by the Legislature. Mr. Speaker, in due course I will appoint persons to serve on the Tax Reform Commission, whose work will include various domestic issues and, as appropriate, consideration and analysis of the finally agreed full package of the two BEPS Pillars. I therefore anticipate the Tax Reform Commission may not engage in the full scope of its work until after October 2021 when the technical aspects of the two BEPS Pillars are completed by the Inclusive Framework and endorsed by the G20 meetings.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to highlight that the work of the Commission and subsequent decision-making will reflect the culture of collaboration, innovation and communication which has contributed to the success of this jurisdiction. In conjunction with industry and other key strategic partners, Bermuda will continue to look for opportunities and employ strategies that are beneficial to individuals and businesses and allow our Island home to effectively compete in this ever-changing marketplace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement at this time?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Only if you feel as though I am appropriately dressed for the occasion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, I see you at a distance, but I do recognise some red in that colour. So I assume that you are appropriately dressed with that blue beside it. So you can continue.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you. As well as my colleague, Neville Tyrrell, is in red and blue as well. I just wanted to put that on record.

The Speaker: You are in good company then.

MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES FERRY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, on the 27th of June 2021, the fast ferry *Resolute* returned to Bermuda after an extensive nine-month retrofit project at Gladding-Hearn shipyard in Boston, the original builders, at the cost of \$2 million. This refit will extend the vessel's lifespan by some 12 years. Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding is located in Massachusetts. It is the closest shipyard to Bermuda with suitable facilities and relevant expertise. While other yards may have suitable expertise, they are located farther away. This increased distance represents a higher cost and risk for deliveries and could impact the vessels' return to service. Gladding-Hearn has a history of successful projects with Marine and Port Services dating back to 1980. These projects include the following:

- *St. George*- pilot boat (built in 1980);
- *Dragon*- buoy tender and buoys (1981);
- *Princeton* and *Inspector*- tugs (1984);
- *St. David*- pilot boat (1986);
- Refit of the *St. George* (1998);
- *Serenity* and *Resolute*- ferries (built in 2002);
- *St. David*- pilot boat (2011).

Additionally, [Gladding-Hearn] regularly provides expert advice and service parts to [Marine and Port Services](#) to keep the vessels in service. They value this business and interface with Marine and Ports personnel, as it gives them essential feedback as to which design details and products work best in Bermuda's environment so that they can improve their future service.

Mr. Speaker, the *Resolute* has all new machinery including main engines, generators, steering system, newly upgraded air conditioning, new windows, updated navigational equipment, all new interior, new bathrooms and fully outfitted CCTV cameras with recording capabilities and a PA system for public

safety announcements, to name a few. The *Resolute* is currently being cleaned and prepped to return to service on both the green and blue ferry routes, servicing both the general public and our cruise ship passengers.

Last week Thursday I had the opportunity to see the upgrades first-hand. I was also able to meet with the all Marine and Ports crew, who delivered the *Resolute* on the 635-nautical-mile voyage across the North Atlantic Ocean. Those individuals are Captain Joseph Nicholas Maynard; Chief Engineer, Jean Le-maire; Deck Officer, Elijah Simmons; Seaman, Calvin Burgess; Seaman, Warren Foggo; and Mechanic, Jomel Smith.

Mr. Speaker, the second fast ferry, *Serenity*, is scheduled to depart for the Boston shipyard the week of July 19 to undergo a similar refit and is expected to return to Bermuda in May 2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning, Minister. Go right ahead.

FOURTH UPDATE ON THE STIMULUS PROGRAMME

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to provide another update on the Short Term [Stimulus Programme](#) that was launched on December 17, 2020, to a maximum value of BMD\$13,385,000 where small to medium-sized contractors were invited to participate.

Mr. Speaker, the programme was launched as it was determined there was an urgent need to provide stimulus to the local economy in order to retain and boost employment numbers in the wake of the economic downturn sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Speaker, as a result, the Ministry of Public Works [compiled a list of shovel-ready projects that are executable almost] immediately. These projects are mostly infrastructure improvements and will not add further burden to government operational expenses. The project's selection principles are to maximise the employment of the private sector while providing much-needed refreshing of neglected infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure a fair and equitable allocation of the stimulus funding across the participating businesses, the Ministry maintains a register of approved contractors and awarded contracts to en-

sure that no one company monopolises the project list. Once a company obtains a project, they will be rotated to the bottom of the list to allow other companies an opportunity for work. The guiding principle is to prioritise all companies that provide the most employment benefit per dollar spent while spreading the work among Bermudian-owned and -operated businesses. Many of these small- to medium-sized businesses have never worked for government before, and oftentimes the challenge is cashflow. In light of this we have arranged with the Accountant General Department to accelerate the payment schedule to every two weeks, noting that those who owe government money must engage in a payment plan in order to secure the work.

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Minister, are you having an audio problem there?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: What?

The Speaker: You are having a little audio problem that time. Continue.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: [INAUDIBLE] A total of 16 projects are underway. The nine projects currently ongoing are as follows:

- Flatt's Bridge handrail project—work underway;
- Artemis building B interior work—started May 21, 2021, duration eight weeks;
- Elbow Beach Access—May 17, 2021, duration five weeks. Substantial completion has been achieved with the steps poured and in place. Waiting on fabrication and installation of handrails, which should be complete in two to three weeks.
- New Plant Inspection Building at Botanical Gardens—started May 24, duration 16 weeks;
- Veranda repairs at Camden—

Mr. Speaker, I am going to turn my video off to help with the sound.

The Speaker: Yes, it may help. There you go.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: At Elbow Beach again,

- Elbow Beach Access—May 17, 2021, duration five weeks. Substantial completion has been achieved with the steps poured and in place. Waiting on fabrication and installation of handrails, which should be complete in two to three weeks;
- New Plant Inspection Building at Botanical Gardens—started May 24, duration 16 weeks;
- Veranda repairs at Camden—started week of May 30, duration 12 weeks;
- Roadside Fencing Project 2—started June 7, duration four weeks;

- Dock Maintenance Pack 2—started June 14, duration six weeks;
- Dock Maintenance Pack 3—started June 14, duration six weeks;
- Darrell's Wharf Dock Repairs—started June 28, duration four weeks.

Mr. Speaker, two contracts awarded but awaiting start date are as follows:

- Artemis Building B wash-down area, awarded to Heart and Soul Construction. Start date is August 2; and
- Wastewater Section landscaping project, awarded to Unity Edible Landscapes. Start date is August 2; duration is four weeks.

Five completed projects are as follows:

- MDL Lab, completion date June 11, with official opening conducted yesterday;
- Artemis Building A, loading dock repairs completed June 16;
- Global Innovation, roadside fencing project 5, Mullet Bay Road, St. George's, completed July 7;
- Creative Exteriors Management, roadside fencing 1, Smith's South Road, completed July 9;
- Brown and Co., roadside fencing 3, Government Hill, completed July 9.

Mr. Speaker, projects out for RFQs or evaluation are as follows:

- Cleaning Pembroke Canal—RFQ received May 6. Evaluations are ongoing. Pre-contract site meetings are scheduled for next week.
- Roadside Vegetation Removal—RFQ received May 5. Evaluations are ongoing.
- Quarry Slate Shelter—RFQ received June 9. Still undergoing evaluations, as there was a large discrepancy in price between contractors.

Mr. Speaker, Financial—to date, we have spent \$1,618,735.14 (or 12 per cent of the stimulus funds).

[Audio difficulties]

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes?

The Speaker: Continue.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: [INAUDIBLE] Fourteen out of 93 companies have been awarded stimulus contracts. We are very pleased with the response to the stimulus programme thus far from both contractors and likely employees, all of whom want to get to work and help the economy improve. These projects are

bearing fruit, and one can expect to see a continuation of stimulus activity occurring around the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. And, Minister, let me just say if you intend to speak later today, maybe have your technical look at your system. Because normally you come through very clear, but today you seem to have a little issue there. Okay?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: They have already been [INAUDIBLE], Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Good.

Members, the next Statement this morning is that of the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Minister Furbert, would you like to make your presentation?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, I would, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to submit to this Honourable House the [Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission](#) for the year ending December 31, 2020. Mr. Speaker, the Commission has a statutory remit to protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act 1981. The Commission's mandate is to both educate and promote the principles of non-discrimination and equality and to investigate and endeavour to settle allegations of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission is required to do the following:

- Encourage an understanding of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution and the principle that all members of the community are of equal dignity, have equal rights and have an obligation to respect the dignity and rights of each other;
- Promote an understanding of, acceptance of and compliance with the Human Rights Act 1981;
- Conduct research and develop initiatives designed to eliminate discriminatory practices;
- Encourage and coordinate activities which seek to forward the principle that every member of the community is of equal dignity and has equal rights; and
- Promote the conciliation and settlement of any complaints or grievances arising out of acts of unlawful discrimination and, where in its opin-

ion such good offices are inappropriate, institute prosecution for contraventions of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission provides assistance to those who believe they have experienced discrimination or have any questions related to their rights and responsibilities under the Human Rights Act. The Commission is both a public watchdog for human rights compliance and a resource to foster and promote human rights principles by working with stakeholders across the Island, including government, community organisations, schools, businesses and individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission works to further its objective of eradicating discrimination through the following means:

- helping to address any and all queries related to human rights in Bermuda;
- assisting with complaints of discrimination under the Human Rights Act 1981;
- providing dispute resolution services through mediation and conciliation to help settle complaints of discrimination;
- policy review and guidance with all stakeholders in support of human rights obligations;
- engaging in collaborative presentations, research and educational programming;
- consultations to support the evolution of legislation, just practices and policies in support of human rights compliance;
- educational presentations, workshops and training tailored to meet the stakeholders' needs in support of their human rights education and compliance commitments;
- advice and consultation with Government on proposed legislative amendments and to ensure consistency with international standards;
- administering of Human Rights Tribunals;
- providing guidance to government, organisations, businesses and educational institutions on the development and implementation of the human rights-based approach to legislation, policies, programmes and complaint-handling mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Act and international human rights agreements.

Mr. Speaker, included in the annual report you will note that during the 2020 calendar year the Commission received 140 complaints, with the majority of complaints citing claims of discriminatory differences in treatment on the grounds of disability (31 per cent), place of origin (16 per cent), sex (14 per cent) and race (8 per cent). Of those complaints the majority cited claims of discrimination within the protected area of employment (at 59 per cent). Claims of discriminatory workplace harassment amounted to 9 per cent of intakes. Of the total intakes received in 2020, there are 14 (or 10 per cent) that remain ongoing, with the remaining 126 (or 90 per cent) resolved.

As 2020 unfolded against the trauma and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Bermuda faced the challenge of balancing public health measures against the safeguarding of civil liberties and human rights. The complex nature of the COVID-19 crisis reaffirmed the critical role of the National Human Rights Institutions in promoting a human rights-based approach to managing the pandemic. Fundamental considerations around individual and collective rights emerged in response to the crisis, as Bermuda recognised that we are only as safe and secure as our most vulnerable.

The themes of *Resilience and Reckoning* became emblematic of a year defined by social justice and advocacy. The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in the United States saw over 7,000 Bermudians converge in solidarity to support this historic human rights movement.

The Commission partnered with Citizens Up-rooting Racism in Bermuda (CURB) to produce the Black History in Bermuda Timeline. Contemporary research by historians and academics continues to fill a massive void left by earlier works focused on select descriptions of Bermuda's colonial history, largely erasing the Black narrative. This evolving resource repository continues to benefit from the contribution of historians and knowledge-bearers.

The Commission joined Bermuda in mourning the passing of Dr. Eva Hodgson. Dr. Hodgson dedicated her life to elevating the national consciousness to address the scourge of racism. Her remarkable example and body of work will continue to inform Bermuda's human rights education and enlighten generations to come.

An Equal World is an Enabled World was the International Women's Day theme. The Commission joined stakeholders at a convening hosted by the Women's Resource Centre to recalibrate collective commitments to accelerate gender parity to ensure a more equitable Bermuda. Data published by UN Women early in the COVID-19 outbreak revealed that gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence against women and girls, had intensified worldwide.

Due to COVID-19, Pride 2020 was a stark contrast to the jubilant celebrations of 2019; however, it was no less significant. The 8th of August convening marked the seventh anniversary of the amendment to include sexual orientation in the Human Rights Act 1981. The executive officer's remarks emphasised that the addition of sexual orientation as a protected ground enhanced Bermuda's human rights framework and renewed our commitment to the fundamental rights and freedoms of all.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 30A of the Human Rights Act 1981, I am pleased to have laid before this Honourable House the Human Rights Commission Annual Report for the year ending December 31, 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement and final Statement for this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour.

Minister Hayward, would you like to present your Statement?

EXTENDING THE TERM FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF ABLE-BODIED UNEMPLOYMENT RECIPIENTS

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House, I rise today to inform you that the Government intends to extend the five-year limitation for a payment of an award to abled-bodied unemployed recipients of [financial assistance](#) for an additional two years by amending section 6A of the Financial Assistant Regulations 2004 (the Regulations). The amendment will also make this change retroactive effective from April 1, 2021, in order to validate payments made since the beginning of the 2021/22 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that in accordance with section 6A(1) of the Regulations, "Payment of an award to an abled-bodied recipient shall be limited to a maximum period of five years, whether that period is—(a) continuous; or (b) an aggregate period made up of two or more awards." The House should be advised that the five-year term for some Financial Assistance clients expired on March 31, 2021. Accordingly, a retroactive amendment to the legislation will be required to address the issue with respect to payments made since April 1, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, the mission of the Department of Financial Assistance is to assist Bermudians to maintain a standard of living during challenging economic times. The Department of Financial Assistance has always worked hard to achieve its mission, and as of June 2021 the number of persons on assistance was 2,306. The largest category pertained to pensioners (1,037), followed by those with a disability (786), then persons employed with insufficient earnings (245). The smallest category is the able-bodied unemployed persons (238), although this number continues to trend upwards monthly as a result of the labour market conditions in the aftermath [of] the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this time to remind this Honourable House that the Department of Financial Assistance also provides funding support to eligible persons on financial assistance in the following areas:

- rent;
- nursing and rest home fees;
- food allowance;
- health insurance;

- disability services;
- BELCO allowance;
- personal home care allowance;
- medical supplies and equipment;
- telephone allowance.

Mr. Speaker, it is expected that the effects of the pandemic will be felt for some time into the foreseeable future. This could not have been predicted at the time the five-year term was introduced. This Government remains committed to assisting and supporting every Bermudian, especially those who face challenges in getting back to gainful and meaningful employment. The Government remains steadfast in devotion to the community as the Island recovers and heals from this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the financial assistance reform strategy, the Department of Workforce Development and the Department of Financial Assistance have partnered to ensure that Personal Employment Plans are provided to Financial Assistance clients. Personal Employment Plans are designed to strengthen employment support services to Financial Assistance clients. Each abled-bodied recipient will be provided with an individual plan aimed at helping recipients to achieve financial independence.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative will help Bermudians to secure gainful and meaningful employment. The employment plans include work readiness, financial literacy and computer literacy training, along with individual career coaching and support. These plans are a critical catalyst to empowering recipients and reducing their dependency on financial support.

Mr. Speaker, as the Government has done since the onset of the pandemic, we will continue to provide the necessary support, assistance and resources needed to carry Bermudians through this unprecedented and, for many, unpredictable time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

We will now move on.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, we have 60 minutes for Question Period. Today we have both written questions and questions from the Statements that were given this morning. We will start with the written questions, and all of the written questions this morning have indicated that they will be for oral responses.

The first written question this morning is for the Minister of Health from MP Dunkley.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF FULLY VACCINATED TRAVELLERS TESTING POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

To the Honourable Minister: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with the total number of fully vaccinated travellers who have tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival in Bermuda or with any day 4, day 8 or day 14 test since February 1, 2021?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister, we do not hear you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the total number of fully vaccinated travellers who have tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival in Bermuda or with any day 4, day 8 or day 14 test since February 1, 2021, is 24.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further question, or supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Honourable Minister, is there any awareness of what vaccines have been used in those 24 cases?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: No, Mr. Speaker, I would not have that information.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Is the Minister able to give a breakdown of the positive cases on each test date?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, in February there were [nil] for arrival day 4, day 8 or day 14. In March there were two: One was a day 8 and one was a day 14. In April there were five: One was arrival, one was day 4, one was day 8 and two were day 14. In May there were two: One was an arrival, and one was on day 4. In June there were eight—six on arrival and two on day 4. In July, between July 1 and July 7, there were seven—two on arrival, five on day 4.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Those were your two supplementaries from your one question. So we will move on.
Next.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No problem.

The next written question this morning is to the Minister of Health from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I was trying to bring up my video.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I will start anyway.

The Speaker: You can get your video going as you talk.

QUESTION 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF QUARANTINE EXEMPTIONS ISSUED MONTHLY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please provide the Honourable House the total number of quarantine exemptions issued [monthly] by Government from the beginning of the programme to July 10, 2021?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: While the Minister is responding, you can sort out your camera for us, MP.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am.

The Speaker: Yes.

Go ahead, Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Minister, we don't have your audio.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the total number of quarantine exemptions issued by Government from the beginning of the programme until the 10th of July 2021 is 294.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, any supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to do your second question?

QUESTION 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF QUARANTINE EXEMPTIONS APPLIED FOR MONTHLY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please provide the Honourable House with the total number of quarantine exemption applications applied for, for each month from the programme's inception to July 10, 2021?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the total number of quarantine exemption applications applied for from the programme's inception to the 10th of July 2021 is 460.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I asked for the number of applications for each month so I could see a trend.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member would note that the requirements with respect to the quarantine facilities started on the 20th of June. So it has not been a month yet.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary, MP Jackson?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, please.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you. Good morning, Minister.

I am just curious whether you have a breakdown of the category of exemptions—i.e., college students, children, health, et cetera.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: As is provided for under the Order, the exemptions category relates specifically to persons who are medically vulnerable and/or they are caregivers. In order to apply for an exemption, one must produce medical evidence either from a physician or a psychologist confirming the said exemption.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Nothing from me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, MP Pearman. Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister. You identified two categories of exemption. I understood that there were three categories of exemption down from the original seven. Have the three been reduced to two? Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: With respect to minors, minors do not have to apply for an exemption, though they qualify for same. Once it is ascertained what their age is and proof of their age, then the process is more administrative.

They are not having to apply for an exemption, because they are a minor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. No supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, no further supplementaries for your question 2?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, sir.

The Speaker: Would you like to move on to your question 3?

QUESTION 3: TOTAL COST TO GOVERNMENT FOR QUARANTINE SITES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House the total monthly cost to the Government for all quarantine sites from inception of the programme to July 10, 2021?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, this question has been redirected to the Ministry of National Security by way of the Clerk to the Legislative Office, as this information does fall within the remit of National Security.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker—

[Crosstalk]

The Clerk: Good morning. Yes, the questions have been deferred. And in the email that we received yesterday, the Minister of National Security would like to defer them.

You are copied in the email, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. That is what I was about to say. I was just waiting for the Opposition Leader to make sure he was clear on what was just stated, that your question was best suited for another Minister to answer. And when that was determined, it was sent to that other Minister.

Unfortunately, the timing was a little slow in that the other Minister has sought to have a deferment until next week, and they will provide the answer for you next week.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay then.

The Speaker: Thank you. So we will come back to question 3 next week under the respective Minister who will respond to it. Thank you.

The next series of written questions now are from MP Dunkley to Minister Ming, National Security.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your two questions?

QUESTION 1: ST. REGIS DEVELOPERS EXEMPTION APPROVAL

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House if an exemption letter was issued under the Minister's name as it pertains to the exemption given to the St. Regis to conduct construction during the stay-at-home period in April, which was ultimately rescinded?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this is actually something that can be found in the public domain, as we made a statement on this on April 14 with regard to an exemption that was granted to St. Regis.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP, the Minister is saying that it is a matter that is already in the public domain. And as you know, the rules allow for items that are already in the public domain, that the Minister can refer to the fact that it is already out there.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I believe the Minister has remarked that an exemption was given in error. How did the error occur?

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I am sure—

The Speaker: Well, I am just trying to ascertain whether . . . I am reading the original. The original is already in the [public] domain. The original here does not speak to the error. And I do not have the statement that is already in the public domain in front of me to know if that actually falls under that response.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: If my memory is correct, it says there was an exemption in error. And that is what I am requesting—

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Point of order.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: The supplementary has to be guided by the response of information that is shared to us during this Question Period. The response was simply that it is already in the public domain, which allows the Minister to quote that. Without having the information in front of us right now, we cannot refer to exactly what is in there. My suggestion would be for a later date if you would like to have a further question, you can use whatever information that you gather from the public domain and base your question on that. Because I just cannot verify it right now in front of me.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I understand, Mr. Speaker. But I am sure the Honourable Minister can verify it,

because the Honourable Minister made the statement in the public domain.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes. Mr. Speaker, this question is put to rest because it is in the public domain. So there can be no supplementaries to it. And you are correct when you say you cannot refer to anything.

The Honourable Member needs to go to the next question.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: You have given the proper direction.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

MP, as I was directing you, I do not have that [information] in front of me to refer to. I am not saying you cannot put the question, but you can put the question at a later date if you go to the information that is in the public domain and base your question on that. But we just do not have it in front of us right now.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, if that is what you please. I am sure it would be easy for the Minister to [respond] here. But I accept your ruling.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I am just trying to get some understanding of how the error occurred, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No problem. We can go on to the second question.

QUESTION 2: ST. REGIS HOTEL DEVELOPERS EXEMPTION APPROVAL

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Okay, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House if any other verbal or electronic communication was provided to anyone at the St. Regis from any Minister or the Premier, informing or notifying the St. Regis of approval or an intention to approve construction work during the stay-at-home period?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

No, not that I am aware of.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No, Mr. Speaker, because I am sure we would have to deal with the public domain. And I will accept your ruling.

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

Members, that brings us to a close of the written questions.

We will now move on to questions from the Statements that were given this morning. And on the first Statement this morning from the Premier, there was a question from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question at this stage?

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LOCAL SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES SINCE THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have two simple questions.

Can the Premier confirm the amount that the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation has assigned in guarantees for the Loan Guarantee Programme? I know that they have total outstanding guarantees of \$442,000 approximately. What is the allotment that the BEDC has established for its guarantee programme?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer as best as I can.

I think referring to the Statement that it shows a total guarantee capacity of the BEDC, and the guarantee capacity is governed by statute. So if there is more capital given, the guarantee capacity is actually six times the capital. So I am not entirely certain if I can answer the Member's question.

The Opposition Leader is asking, How much is assigned to the guarantee? And there is no assignment; there is a maximum amount that is allowed by statute.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. I understand the statutory requirements. I think from best practice and business prudence, each year we would say that we would allow "X" million dollars for guarantees. So for the budget year, I am certain from a business point of view, the BEDC has indicated that they would allot up

to, saying hypothetically, \$2 million in guarantees over the coming year. And that is what I am speaking to, Mr. Premier.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think I understand the Honourable Member's question. But I do not believe that there is currently a restriction. I am happy to follow up. But what I would say is if there was the limit which the Honourable Opposition Leader is suggesting and there were more persons who want the guarantees, I am not sure if the Honourable Opposition Leader is suggesting that the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation would not do that. So that would not be a policy that the Government of Bermuda would support; we support issuing guarantees up to the amount which is stated and allowed for in law. And I think that the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation has a very prudent board that can look and manage the risks that need to be managed.

So I am happy if he wants to follow up with a specific question in writing, and I can do my best to get that information for him. But to my knowledge I do not believe that there is a restriction on the amount of guarantees that can be given out on an annual basis. I think it is governed by the Act itself, in the confines of the Act.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Speaker: Further question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Question or supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: This is a question.

The Speaker: Second question. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: UPDATE ON SUPPORT PROVIDED TO LOCAL SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES SINCE THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Premier just tell the community what the application fees are and the fee for the use of the guarantees?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information off the top of my head. I believe all of the information would be on the BEDC website, as my Statement referred. All fees were cut in half.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I saw that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Also, the BEDC also, they made the fees for credit checks, which were also charged to persons prior to these matters, the BEDC is absorbing those fees themselves. But I will say that the fees are in the public domain, and they are listed on the website, certainly, or on the applications.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I have no further questions, but I would like to commend the BEDC and Erica Smith for the work that they are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Thank you, Members.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

The Speaker: Members, the next Statement this morning that has questions is that of the Finance Minister. Finance Minister, you have a question from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: OECD INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

On page 3 of the Finance Minister's Statement, he says, "Mr. Speaker, with respect to Pillar One, initial estimates conclude that approximately 80 multinational enterprises worldwide would qualify as in-scope of Pillar One . . ." Can the Minister tell us whether we have any of those 80 companies doing business in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge. We are doing some work within the Ministry of Finance to do a bit of a data call so that we can try to ascertain the impacts of Pillar One and Pillar Two on constituent companies that are located in Bermuda. But Pillar One is largely targeted at technology companies, for which we have none located here in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? Supplementary or new question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So you, the Minister indicated that—

The Speaker: Is it a new question or a supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental, supplemental.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister indicated that he would be doing a data draw to secure the information generally. When does he expect to have this project completed?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We are currently working on figuring out what data we need to get. And then we need to talk to stakeholders and make sure that we train—they get the data-gathering exercise in its appropriate context. But my hope is that we will be positioned for October to have the data that we would need to assess. The OECD has a bunch of work to do between now and October with the finalisation of the details around Pillar One and Pillar Two. And doing some preliminary work is important, but doing too much work without having the benefit of details would be a fool's errand. So sometime between now and the end of September we will have finality around what the data sets look like.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: OECD INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: On page 5 of 8 the Minister says, "Bermuda has been actively involved in ongoing discussions relating to this initiative to present positions that reflect the national interest and that of our various stakeholders." Can the Minister provide the details of any discussions that he has had with international bodies overseas in regard to this initiative?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the Statement, Bermuda is a member of the Inclusive Framework. There has been ongoing dialogue on this topic for the better part of two-plus years. We have representation in the Inclusive Framework, and so we participate in the forums. And in those forums we articulate our points of view with respect to the direction of travel around this initiative.

An Hon. Member: Do you have any specifics?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I think we have highlighted four or five particular areas of concern. One of them

would be the overall rate that is being contemplated. I think initially there was a 12.5 per cent rate. There has now been what appears to be some sort of a consensus around 15 per cent.

We expressed the point of view around the method of blending, whether it is jurisdictional or global blending. We also talked about carve-out or economic substance, we talked about carve-out for insurance and reinsurance. We also talked about maintenance of deferred tax accounting treatment for companies as well. Those are among the things that we highlighted during our discussions that we continue to highlight in our conversations with other key allies, other countries that are also participating in the Inclusive Framework discussions and who may have similar interests to Bermuda with respect to the implementation of this initiative.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So who are the allies that we are working with?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it would be appropriate for me at this point to disclose which allies we are talking to. I certainly would feel comfortable having a one-on-one conversation with the Shadow Minister of Finance to share that information if necessary.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is all I have.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister of Finance, you also have questions this morning from MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: OECD INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORK

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister, for your very clear and concise Statement to us. It is always refreshing to get this sort of information given in such a straightforward and fair way.

My question arises at pages 4 and 5 of your Statement where you quote your previous press statement of the 2nd of July. At the top of page 5, you refer to the “ongoing technical discussions ahead of the meeting of G20 Finance Ministers . . . in October 2021.” My first question is this: What visibility if any do you have about the timetable formed after October 2021?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We do not have much visibility beyond October 2021. I think everyone is cur-

rently focused on the negotiations that need to happen between now and the end of October in advance of the G20 Finance Ministers meeting to ensure that the details are worked out for some sort of agreement on details. So the next key milestone I think for all involved is the October 2021 Finance Ministers meeting.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

In respect of that October 2021 meeting and specifically with reference to page 6 of 8 of your Statement in the middle paragraph, you quite sensibly anticipate that the Tax Reform Commission is not going to engage in matters until after the October 2021 details are released. So my next question is this: If presumably the magic is not in the date of October 2021, but in the completion of the technical discussions and their outcome, and we can assume sensibly that the Tax Reform Commission may not engage until we have that outcome, is that a fair assumption on my part, Minister?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, it is not. What I did say is, “I therefore anticipate the Tax Reform Commission may not engage in the *full* scope . . . ,” which means they will not be able to opine fully on the impact of OECD initiatives on potential tax reform. There is still a body of work that needs to be done with respect to reviewing domestic taxes in and of themselves.

And initially, I think the work around tax reform was contemplated to focus almost solely on domestic matters of keeping an eye on developments at the OECD. Anyone who has followed the events would know that there was a bit of a radical change in direction with the inauguration of President Biden. Prior to that, there was a view that the OECD discussions around BEPS [Base Erosion and Profit Shifting] Pillar One and Pillar Two were being led out of Europe. I think the prior US administration had taken a bit of a hands-off approach. And that has changed as a result of after January the 20th.

So we will do some work around domestic, keeping an eye on developments from the OECD. But any reforms that are going to be based on OECD work will have to reflect the completed work of the OECD.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. I think the last bit of your answer actually does agree with me. What I was wondering is, it is fair to say that the Tax Reform Commission's focus on these matters, not domestic matters, but on these matters needs to know the parameters they are working on. So there needs to be some sort of consensus released from after or on October 2021 before they can really engage with them. You cannot put the cart before the horse, and I think that is what you are saying.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: It is. Although I would say, because I want to be very careful about this, there is work that can be ongoing in parallel to the developments out of the OECD. It will be over the course of the next several months, various ideas that have been floated by members of the Inclusive Framework for potential inclusion. My team who sit in those meetings will be able to kind of ascertain whether or not there is any consensus around certain ideas. And we can start doing some potential scenario-playing with respect to our own situation. So I do not expect that there is going to be a hard-start coming up to October or once October has happened. I would expect that this will be an issue that would be front in line for folks keeping a watching brief on what is going on and then trying to start to think about potential impacts on Bermuda and how we potentially respond to them.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister, for your answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no second question.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Minister, that is the end of the questions for you this morning.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement from the Minister of Transport.

Minister of Transport, you have questions this morning from MP Pearman.

MP, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES FERRY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Honourable Minister for his Statement on the Marine and Ports Services. (Just making sure you have my video. I think you do now.)

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Minister, you gave a Statement to the House about the lifespan and deployment of the ferry *Resolute*, which was refitted at a

\$2 million cost. You indicated that the refit would extend the vessel's lifespan by some 12 years. I presume that is 12 years from today, from the day of the refit. Is that correct?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: That is correct.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Grateful.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: In terms of the lifespan and deployment, you indicated in your Statement that it would be for the green and blue ferry routes. Obviously, Minister, you are familiar with what those routes are, but the House and the public may not be. Could you kindly confirm which routes this ferry *Resolute* will be servicing?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: So that is mainly, and for the most simplistic answer, that is the Somerset route, town to Somerset.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second question?

The Speaker: The second question. Yes.

QUESTION 2: MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES FERRY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, you discussed the Marine and Ports Services more generally, listing a history of services dating back to the 1980s. With those services in mind, can you assist us with information on the situation in St. George's, with the Viking *Orion* in St. George's, please?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: If the Member could clarify what about the Viking *Orion*? What services?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry. I apologise if I was not sufficiently clear.

As the Minister will be aware, the Viking *Orion* is not stopping in St. George's as part of its homeporting efforts which, to the Minister's credit, I understand are extending. Could you just assist with any information that the House should be aware of as to why

Viking is not going to be stopping in St. George's, and what steps if any the Ministry has done in relation to that?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: All right. So it is mainly down to four main reasons. The weather conditions, which provided an uncomfortable experience for guests; guests having issues and concerns with boarding and de-boarding the tender out at the ocean, out in the Murray's Anchorage; also a cost. It would be helpful for the House to note that on Fridays it would cost \$9,855 for the Friday tender, and \$17,520 for the tender on the Saturday. So in addition to that, it was a waiting time of up to 90 minutes for the tender awaiting dock space.

Also, the ramp we needed at the dock space for the customers who are, on average, 80 years old or older on the Viking, the ramp did not offer a smooth transition from the tender to the dock, and that was also something that the customers replied made things awkward for them.

The Speaker: MP, before you try to put a supplementary to that, let me just say that the answer that the Minister just gave you was a courtesy. Nothing in the question or his response related to the refit programme, which is what his Statement was about. Take it as a courtesy.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, I do take it as a courtesy.

The Speaker: If you have a third question that does relate to the Statement, you can put your third question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No. I think the Minister's Statement was extremely informative for the House and the public, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for his Statement.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, you have a second Member who wants to put questions to you. And that is MP Dunkley.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your questions now?

QUESTION 1: MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES FERRY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Honourable Minister: Is the pilot boat *St. David* currently overseas for refit or repair at this present time?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Can the Minister give an overview of the work that is required and why?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Actually the overview of the work is still being assessed as to exactly what needs to be done. But it is anticipated that the work necessary will take up to four to eight weeks to complete.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Why is it necessary that the work is done at this time?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: It is necessary for the work to be done at this time because the vessel is inoperable to be able to resume its duties in its current condition.

The Speaker: Okay. Second question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES FERRY RETROFIT PROGRAMME

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Can the Minister please provide the reasons why the vessel is inoperable at the present time?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: It was involved in an incident which is in the public domain.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Is there any rough estimate of how much the work will cost?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: The estimate of the work is going to cost approximately \$600,000, which will be covered by insurance. And the only thing that will come out of the government's pocket would be the deductible.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, in regard to the insurance.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, correct, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the insurance claim, what is the level of the deductible?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: It will be \$10,000.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary to MP Dunkley's question: Are you able to give a timeframe by which the boat might be back in service?

The Speaker: I think he said it would be from four to eight weeks.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am sorry. I did not hear that.

The Speaker: The Minister said that the repair work should take anywhere from four to eight weeks.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So second supplementary then, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: When does the Honourable Minister anticipate that the *St. David* will be back in operations?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: In four to eight weeks.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Thank you, Minister. There are no further questions for you on this one.

The next Statement that has questions this morning would be the Statement of the Minister of Works.

Minister of Works, you have questions this morning from MP Dunkley.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: FOURTH UPDATE ON STIMULUS PROGRAMME

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for the Statement on the stimulus projects.

To the Honourable Minister: I note in the Statement, I believe there was no mention of any work on the Railway Trail. In light of the fact that the Railway Trail is used more and more nowadays, and I am aware of at least one senior having a nasty fall because of the uneven surface and the high grass, is there any intention by the Minister and the department to include Railway Trail upkeep in this stimulus programme?

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, not at this time. The Parks staff are paid overtime on weekends to address the Railway Trail. I and they get regular calls [about] areas in need of attention, so I would invite the MP to share that information and we will get it onto the list.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I thank the Minister for that. Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: FOURTH UPDATE ON STIMULUS PROGRAMME

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Can the Minister provide the number of jobs provided to date in the stimulus programme?

[Pause]

The Speaker: I think the Minister is looking for the answer for you.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I did not hear the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. The question was, Can you supply the number of jobs that have been payable through the stimulus?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I can get that information.

The Speaker: Okay.

The Minister is undertaking to get the answer for you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be indebted in that regard.

The Speaker: Thank you. Any more questions?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No, Mr. Speaker. But I do not know if this is the appropriate time. The last sitting, the Honourable Minister of Health committed to get back to me on three questions in regard to the travel authorisation form.

The Speaker: Okay. We will make note of that again. Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister of Works, you have a further Member who would like to put questions to you.

MP Cannonier, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: FOURTH UPDATE ON STIMULUS PROGRAMME

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to all.

Taking into light on page 1 where the Minister has on this occasion and previous occasions mentioned that this was a stimulus programme that they have put in place, and then on page 2 taking a look at the nine projects currently going on, my first question then is, Amongst these projects, do they require special expertise?

And I ask that question for a reason. But do any of these projects require any particular special expertise that Works and Engineering is not capable of doing?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I would say that in some cases the answer would be, it is called *stimulus*

because we had a significant reduction in our capital accounts expenditure for 2021. And so some of the work that is being done is done regularly by Public Works staff. So what we are doing is taking advantage of the opportunity for extra funding to get that work done by the [contractors]

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.

So bearing that in mind, financially does the Minister believe that we are not doubling on our expenses by having Works and Engineering facilities not being able to get to the work, or they *should* be doing the work, I should say? Let me just rephrase that.

Based on what he just said, does he believe that some of the work in the schedule that Works and Engineering has, can they fulfil some of this work? Like for instance, roadside vegetation removal—I would have thought that this is a regular thing that Works and Engineering does. Is this because, schedule-wise, they are not able to get to these projects?

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: That would be correct. We were reduced. We have also had a freeze in a number of jobs into our government. And so we are not filling those posts. So what that means is that as an example, the road crews or the parks crews are still carrying out their functions of —

[Audio difficulties]

The Speaker: Minister, I think you may have frozen. You may have frozen for a minute there. Continue on; you are back now.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: So the answer is yes. [INAUDIBLE] for the reason of new posts causes us not to be able to get to the regularly scheduled work of cutting school fields and roadside work. And so this is assisting in that regard.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So considering that—

The Speaker: This will be your second supplementary or new question?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I will do a new question.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: FOURTH UPDATE ON STIMULUS PROGRAMME

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering the fact that we are attempting to save monies on one side, but yet we are spending on the other side, I am just trying to figure out where the balance is here to the taxpayer.

[Pause]

The Speaker: The question is, you are trying to get a . . .

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So if we are saving money because of budget-wise and we do not want to fill posts that will allow us to get these jobs done and that is a measure that has been taken by the Finance Ministry as well as the Works and Engineering Ministry to cut back, on the other hand we are then saying that we are going to take monies from another area and spend those monies to do these projects.

Where is the benefit to the taxpayer here? On the one hand we are saying we are saving money, but on the other hand we are spending money.

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, the stimulus package is as a direct result of COVID-19 and the number of people who are unemployed. So what we have done is put to the Ministry of Finance a proposal to improve the infrastructure and employ people from the private sector to assist in that regard. The Ministry of Finance gave us a figure of \$13 million that we could use in order to be able to do that. And so we are striking the balance in the sense that we would have a significant number of people who are unemployed as a result of COVID-19. And the Government, having spent, I think it is well over \$60 million in unemployment—

[Pause]

An Hon. Member: I think we lost the Minister again.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: —put those people who are unemployed, to employ them.

The Speaker: Okay. I think you are still having a buffering issue there, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes. I am moving all around the office. I expect people to come at lunchtime to help us out.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you. All right.
Additional question there, MP Cannonier?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. A supplementary to that.

The Speaker: Supplementary. Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Bearing the answer in mind, has the Ministry looked at the scheduling of works and maybe revamped that to see how it can be more effective if in fact they are not able to hire, if in fact we are looking to go outside of the regular scope of Works and Engineering, and get others to do this here? Are there ways that we can find efficiencies of producing more with a new type of schedule? You know, we tend to just go off of what we have been doing in the past. I am just curious as to whether or not the Minister has been able to find a way of being more efficient with scheduling to allow for work to get done?

The Speaker: Minister.

[No audible response]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: We lost him.

The Speaker: Okay. Let us just defer that for now, because the Minister is obviously having technical issues. If we can get them resolved before we complete, we will come back to that. Okay, Members, if you do not mind?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

The Speaker: The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement from the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

Minister, MP Jackson would like to put a question to you.

QUESTION 1: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Minister is, How are the Minister and the Human Rights Commission working to improve or amend legislation to address this high percentage of complaints by those living with disabilities?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member, for that question.

If the Member notes in the annual report—well, actually in my report I made, that actually 90 per cent of the issues or complaints that were made through the Human Rights Commission were re-

solved. So if she can be more specific with her question?

The Speaker: Okay.

MP, the Minister has asked if you can direct it, define your question better so she can provide an answer for you that would be fitting.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe just a supplementary clarification then.

Is it possible for the Minister to share just a general category of what these complaints are around? Is it employment? Is it harassment? What those complaints are in general?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that information again is in the annual report. I can give you the page on which that information can be found, and that is page 21 of the annual report.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Minister. I will take note. And having it just having been tabled this morning, I have not had a chance to have a look. So I have made note. Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: You are welcome.

The Speaker: Any further questions? None.

Minister, you also have questions from MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Minister, at page 2 of 4 of your Statement to the Honourable House today, you identified one of the Commission's duties as carrying out "consultations to support the evolution of legislation, just practices and policies in support of human rights compliance." In the report that you tabled, on page 43, the Human Rights Commission identified concerns that they have where the homeless were among those most at risk from changes to the law to limit freedom of movement to combat COVID-19.

My question is this: What legislative steps are envisaged by the Government in respect of the concern identified by the Human Rights Commission regarding homelessness in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member. I do not have that information on me as far as information from

the Human Rights Commission. But I can get that information to you. But the Government is working on initiatives to address issues with the homelessness. And that information will be introduced to the public very soon.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary?

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, by "very soon," does that mean a matter of weeks or months or—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I cannot give you a specific date at this time, Member. But I am hoping within a couple of months.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, second supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Are you able to share with this Honourable House in very broad terms what that legislation will be that we will be dealing with?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: So there is in fact no legislation, Member, that we will be working towards, but more so of a homelessness strategy, framework of national policy.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Second question, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Go right ahead. Put your second question.

QUESTION 2: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Minister, in the same vein but more specifically, also at page 43 of the report, the Commission references that they undertook an independent review of the legislation from this perspective. That was the exercise of powers by the government officials under the emergency coronavirus legislation. Is that an independent review that is in the public domain? Page 43 of the report, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. If you can give me a minute to get that information?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes. It is the bottom left paragraph, if that assists.

[Pause]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: So I do not have the information. I am trying to get it from technical officers. But I can provide that information to you, Member.

The Speaker: The Minister is going to take an undertaking to get the information to you later.

Mr. Scott Pearman: That would be great.

Honourable Minister, I understand that this undertaking is to provide the independent reviews to me, or just to answer my question?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I will check with the Human Rights Commission to see whether the information can be shared. And if it can be shared, I can definitely share that information with you, by way of your question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful, Honourable Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Members, that actually brings us to a close of questions this morning. I think that the Minister of Works is still having a technical problem, so it would probably be wise not to try and get that final answer from him. With the House's indulgence in that, I would appreciate it. So we will now move on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member wish to make a contribution in that regard?

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker, I would. Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It sounds like MP Weeks.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Weeks, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to my colleagues, and good morning to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity this morning to ask this Honourable House to join me in saying good-bye, so long and thank you to Ms. Lynn Outerbridge. Most people are asking about this time, *Who is Ms. Lynn Outerbridge?* If you have gone to DeGraff's

restaurant or Byrdies Café, as we now know it over the last decade—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Associate me, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Associate me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Mr. Weeks, it sounds like you are going to be associating the House, it sounds like. There are many Members who have visited that facility over the years.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes. I will definitely associate the whole House, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Outerbridge, as she is known by many of us as Auntie, Aunt Lynn, Ms. DeGraff, Byrdie or however we have gotten to know her, she is retiring today after 51 years, Mr. Speaker. And I would encourage anybody who has gotten a hamburger or a beef pie or a fishcake or fries from her over these last five decades to stop by today and say good-bye. Because I think that today is definitely her last shift, Mr. Speaker. You know, she has certainly served me and others from Central School as children right up to adulthood. And she is going to be missed. So I encourage everyone to pop by today even for a minute. Even those who are on diets, *I can't eat no fries or fishcakes today*, just say *Hi* and *Bye* and *Thank you* to Ms. Lynn Outerbridge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Member?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons-Wade, you have your three minutes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to extend my condolences to the family of the late Sandra Wade [Allen], as we all know, of the Progressive Labour Party. She was the daughter of Wilfred Mose Allen, who in 1963 founded the PLP, which actually helped to reshape the Bermuda that we know today. Like her father, Ms. Allen did not mince her words. She was a fearless leader, and she stood strong for nursing and for the elderly. She was also a trailblazer, being one of the first Black nurses to come back to Bermuda. She was also a midwife.

Ms. Allen held many leadership positions at the hospital, including through the act of nursing for the Extended Care Unit, also as an evening night co-

ordinator. In Bermuda time, it is very interesting in 1987 one of the things that she said, *The Extended Care Unit was not a place to die. The most important thing is for our seniors to be with their families when the time comes and to stay at home.* And that is the exact same message that we are trying to give to families through the Ageing Well Committee today.

She saw the establishment of the Extended Care Unit, the Alzheimer's Unit. She also worked with Jackie Swan to help with the major upgrade in 1991 of the Extended Care Unit. She was a mentor to many, including me, at the Bermuda Hospitals Board. She was always available to give advice, to give support and to give encouragement.

She had many health issues to the end, but she was a fighter to the very, very end. Bermuda should be honoured to have such a strong and passionate nurse serving the people of today. Thank you.

I would also like to extend my condolences [*sic*] to my stepdaughter, Michelle Wade, who celebrates 30 years with Teen Services this week.

The Speaker: You give congratulations to her.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Oh, yes. Congratulations. Sorry.

The Speaker: You said "condolences." You mean congratulations. Okay.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Congratulations, right.

The Speaker: No problem.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to share with this Honourable House the sad loss of Pauline Powell, who was a constituent of mine. Ms. Powell worked at the National Trust for many, many years. And with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to read two comments from the National Trust officers about Ms. Powell.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The first is from the technical officer, Ms. Karen Border, who said this: "Pauline was the smiling public face of the water bill for many years and an absolute treasure to the Trust. She will be greatly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE] A further comment, Mr. Speaker, from Amanda Outerbridge, previously the Executive Director of the Trust, who said this about

Pauline: "Pauline contributed enormously to the Trust, and she was wonderful to work with, always professional and calm with a great sense of humour. She provided vital support to the entire team, notably operationally with revenue collection, administration and fundraising events. She was particularly good with people, including members and volunteers. She was devoted to the work of the Trust and passes on to her family, including her husband John, who was also a valuable supporting volunteer for the Trust." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Mr. Speaker, when I first met Mr. and Mrs. Powell, I was canvassing. I remember how they both said to me, and I hope that this is not too light in the context, but they were *sick of politicians and they would never be voting again.* Mr. Speaker, I can say that on Election Day both of them turned up to the voting booth, to the polling station. I have no idea how they voted or whether they voted. But they arrived, they went in and they came out. And my heartfelt, sincere condolences to Mr. Powell for this very significant loss. And thanks to Ms. Powell in memoriam for all of the work she did for the National Trust and for Bermuda as a whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, I would like for this House to send condolences out to the family of Ms. Inez Caesar, who passed this week. Ms. Caesar will be sorely missed by her daughter, Altama; and sons, Lynn, Dale and Garn.

Also, I would like to send condolences to the family of Ms. Donna Jacobs. She was the daughter of Sylvia and George Francis. And her daughter, Chelsea, who is left to mourn her loss.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to send out condolences to [the family of Charles] Leroy Riley, the hotel man who passed and will be funeralised tomorrow. Mr. Riley, as you all know, was a very astute person, a freedom fighter. In fact, many years ago Mr. Riley was fired from the hotel for trying to organise the workers to join the Bermuda Industrial Union. But he lived on and worked on. You can never leave Mr. Riley and not be sure where his allegiance lay.

An Hon. Member: I would like to be associated.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: He was a stalwart of the Bermuda Industrial Union and a stalwart of the Progressive Labour Party. Mr. Riley will be sorely missed by all who knew him. And as I told one of his grandsons, Oscar, any person would be proud to call Mr. Riley their grandpa, and they would love to have had a person like him—a very astute, principled freedom fighter for the people of this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. We endorse that as well.

Any other Member who would like to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker!

The Speaker: I am hearing two voices. I think it is Neville Tyrrell. Is that your voice?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Tyrrell, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would sadly ask if the House could at this time send condolences to two families with recent passings. The first one is Althea Madre Lightbourne, who actually is the sister of a very good friend of mine, Marshall Minors. And I know her son, I am associated with her son, Jerome, as well. Althea attended the church that I attend, and we saw each other regularly. And she will certainly be missed by many persons.

The second family would be the family of Mary Simmons, of Pearman's Hill, one of my former constituents, the wife of Kennedy Simmons. I ask that condolences be sent to the family as well.

I certainly, Mr. Speaker, want to be associated with the condolences for Mr. Riley, who was a family friend of ours. And I certainly associate as well. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Tyrrell.

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

The Speaker: Yes, MP Cannonier. You have your three minutes.

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

I just want to send out condolences to a good friend of mine who has been involved in my political career since I started, Bobby Baron. His wife just passed away. They have been invaluable to myself as

I began to get involved in this whole thing called *politics*. And it is sad to see that his wife had passed on. It has been a long battle for him, and to a certain degree he has felt a bit of relief because his wife was suffering for so long. So our condolences go out to Bobby Baron in reference to his lovely wife, Julie, who passed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard to Pauline Mary Powell and Althea Madre Lightbourne, whom I have known for many, many years.

And Sandra [Wade] Allen. She was a loving, committed person in the health community. I met her. She was the matron at Matilda Smith, and she took care of my grandmother. I would tell you she is world-class and committed to her profession. And then we became close in regard to family members as a result of her relationship with my grandmother.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also send congratulatory remarks to some young people. They are Mia Oleksak. She achieved perfection in regard to her IB [International Baccalaureate] results. She got 45 out of 45. Elle Rouja got 42 out of 45. Hailey O'Donnell [INAUDIBLE]. Genevieve Lau got 40, and Leahnae Morton-Richardson also got 40.

Mr. Speaker, the cumulation of these young people's achievement places them in the 0.09 percentile of IB candidates around the world. These students who took the exam this year basically totalled 170,000 around the world, and our Bermudian students were amongst the top in the world. And this is not a one-off achievement for Bermudian students. So I would like to commend these youngsters. And for our other Bermudians, keep up the good work. They have been working through tenuous circumstances. So I would like to send congratulatory remarks to these students, to their teachers and to their parents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I wish to be associated with the condolences for Ms. Sandra Allen. Most certainly her lineage is known to every PLP-associated person. She was a fine Bermudian whom I did get to know. Certainly it is important that we give recognition to her and her family on her passing.

I would also definitely like to be associated with the condolences given for Mr. Charles Leroy Riley, as offered by the Deputy Speaker. Mr. Riley was a hero of mine. He was somebody whom I would have known through not only my political life, all political life, but even predating my entrance into active politics because I saw him as somebody of great courage, someone of great eloquence and someone of knowledge. He was also an extremely kind person, offering his counsel to me as a young person, and I know he offered it to many. He was a hero of the labour movement and certainly a hero of the Progressive Labour Party and myself. So, my condolences to his family and to all of those who were a part of Mr. Riley's circle, and certainly the Hamilton Parish community where he lived. Certainly, that is where I would go and see him. And certainly, condolences to the Hamilton Parish community as well for his passing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I will take ladies first. I was not sure of the male's voice, but I heard a lady's voice that time. I believe it was the Minister of National Security?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my time today to convey some really good news. An old schoolmate of mine who has been involved in hospitality for quite some time has recently been promoted to the Director of Food and Beverage at the Hamilton Princess Hotel. He is a young man by the name of Shawn Lekki. He was in my year at the Berkeley. And our team and our alumni are extremely proud of him because we know how hard and how long he has worked within this field. And to see him rise like this, and a Bermudian at that, we are very proud of him. So I am extending congratulations to Shawn Lekki on his recent promotion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous, you have your three minutes, sir.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. Good morning to the people of Bermuda.

I first want to join in with the condolences to the Riley family. Mr. Riley, as the Deputy Premier said, was a hero of mine as well. Often on the radio show with MP Swan, he used to call in. And he would say, *Hey, Mr. Riley, how are you doing?* He would say, *I am normal.* And then he would go on to give some words of wisdom in his eloquent way.

I also want to give condolences to the family of Ms. O'Brien of Loyal Hill, who is the mother of—

The Speaker: You can associate yourself because that was done at an earlier sitting. But go ahead and associate yourself.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I associate myself with that.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a shout-out. Often the people in the background get left behind when it comes to congratulations. I want to thank the people who work processing the TA [Travel Authorisation] forms. Because in travels recently, I have had to interact with them on behalf of myself and others and they have always done what they had to do to ensure that Bermudians and visitors are able to reach our shores safely and meet the requirements.

Also, to the health care workers down at the airport and those who work at Perot and at Bull's Head and Star of India up in . . . your neck of the woods.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Somerset because I went up there this week on my last trip before the Cup comes home, and they said, *We'll see you in two weeks' time.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Cup will visit for two days; I agree.

Mr. Christopher Famous: They said—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you for your contribution, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, Minister Furbert, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to be associated with the comments and condolences for Ms. Althea Lightbourne, commonly known as Ms. Althea Overbey. I have to say that because Ms. Overbey gave many years to Government working with the special needs community, particularly at the KMCC [K. Margaret Carter Centre] school. So I just want to send sincere condolences to [the family of] Mrs. Lightbourne, nee Overbey, her family and just to thank her for the numerous years and love and dedication that she gave to the clients, especially the population and the clients of the K. Margaret Carter Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Burch, that sounds like you.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am going to give it a try.

The Speaker: Go right ahead. You have your three minutes.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I wish to be associated with the condolences to the family of Mr. Leroy Riley, who I think was a mentor to many of us, and spoke wisdom.

I would also like congratulations to be sent to a constituent of mine, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Edith Lorraine Douglas, who [INAUDIBLE] coming goes 100 years old. She has all of her faculties, and she has an opinion on what is going on in the country. She is not afraid to share those views with her MP. I think the only way I got in, Mr. Speaker, when I first canvassed, she did what old-fashioned Bermudians do—*Who are your parents?*

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And when I told her that I was the son of Ellis Burch, whom she knew, I was in like Flynn. So I shall be visiting on Sunday. But she is a sprightly 100-year-old, and I wish her the warmest of congratulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, you have your three minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let me try and get my video right and sorted. Can you hear me?

The Speaker: We hear you.

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

Mr. Speaker, first I would like to be associated with the condolences that have been offered today for Mr. Charles Leroy Riley and of course would ask the Honourable House to send a letter of condolence to his family, his children, Deborah and Charles, and to their children—grandchildren and extended family. Certainly Mr. Riley was an uncompromising warrior for labour and also for the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party. And as many Members have spoken, he could be heard regularly on the radio showing his support for the Progressive Labour Party and the policies of the Progressive Labour Party and labour. He was fearless and unwavering in his support at all times. Certainly the labour movement has lost a stalwart; the Progressive Labour Party has lost a stalwart. And that is something that we certainly regret.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated on a brighter note with the notes of congratulations which were sent by the Minister of National Security, the Honourable Member from constituency 1, to one of my constituents, Mr. Shawn Lekki, who has now officially been appointed as the Food and Beverage Manager for our largest hotel which is currently operating on Island, the Hamilton Princess and Beach Club.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Lekki, as I said, is a constituent of mine. Mr. Lekki is an example of what we are trying to make sure that we accomplish in tourism in this country. In 2017 the Progressive Labour Party had a mantra of *putting Bermudians first*, and it is personally for myself and for this Government a joy to see that the work of which we put in place to ensure that Bermudians are given their rightful place inside the Tourism Ministry has resulted in this move of Shawn being confirmed as Director of Food and Beverage for the Hamilton Princess and Beach Club, Mr. Speaker. So, I wish to congratulate him, and certainly his family. It is well deserved without question. At any point in time if you get to meet Mr. Lekki inside of his element at the Hamilton Princess and Beach Club, it is certainly understood of the work he is doing there. And he also makes a pretty good Swizzle, too, which he shares with his MP from time to time.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Finally, Mr. Speaker, just a matter of congratulations. I do want to send out two notes of congratulations. Two young Bermudian footballers overseas are doing great things, and certainly I want-

ed to congratulate Mr. Ne-Jai Tucker for his first professional contract with Burnley Football Club, an amazing achievement. Certainly Mr. Ajani Burchall, who has now moved on in signing a contract with Aston Villa in the Premier League. Also, without question—

An Hon. Member: I wish to associate myself.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will happily associate the entire House, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Members!

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: I hope you hear the bell.

Hon. E. David Burt: I want to send good wishes to our Bermudian footballers overseas.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Swan, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences to the family of Leroy Riley [INAUDIBLE].

The Speaker: MP, I think we are having an audio issue with you as well this morning. You may want to shift your location.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Does that help, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: That is a little clearer now, yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I want to be associated with the condolences to [the family of] Mr. Leroy Riley.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I got to know him personally and he [INAUDIBLE] myself. As we came to [INAUDIBLE] he shared with me as our relationship grew closer that it was to my great-grandmother they rose up [INAUDIBLE] and has committed to the [INAUDIBLE] and to the Progressive Labour Party [INAUDIBLE] and should be recognised [INAUDIBLE] many years to come.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to send congratulations to a family member, Charles “Charlie” “Chuck” Swan, who today newly became Mister and Missus, a full member of that family. He got married today, and congratulations to Chuck. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right. Thank you.

And just for the clarity on that, you are congratulating a former Member on his marriage today. Your audio got a little disturbed at that point.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution?

No others? No other Member.

Thank you, Members, for your contributions this morning on Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches. We will now move on.

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

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: There are two Bills to be introduced this morning. The first is in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister, would you like to introduce your Bill at this time?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 14 be suspended—

The Speaker: No, no. You can go ahead with the Bill.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, sir.

FIRST READING

INCORPORATED SEGREGATED ACCOUNTS COMPANIES AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am 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 Incorporated Segregated Accounts Companies Amendment Act 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second Bill this morning to be introduced is in the name of the Minister of Labour.

Minister, would you like to move your Bill, introduce your Bill?

FIRST READING

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE EXTENSION AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am 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 Financial Assistance Extension and Validation Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Opposition Bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: [There are] no Private Members' Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: That now, Members, leads us to the Orders of today. And the first Order today is the second reading of the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021, in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister, would you like to present your Bill?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I wish to move the Bill entitled the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce for the second reading the Bill entitled the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021. The purpose of this Bill is to

- 1) give the Minister the power during a national emergency to implement procedures to allow the Director of Planning to expedite the planning application assessment and permission process;
- 2) provide for public consultation of an environmental impact assessment for a preferred development prior to the making of a special development order;
- 3) provide for development orders to be made by the negative resolution procedure rather than the affirmative resolution procedure;
- 4) provide for the designation of privately owned land as a protected conservation area with an agreement with the owner of the land and to include a list of the protected conservation areas; and
- 5) provide for the publication of procedures for emergency development orders and development orders.

Mr. Speaker, I must reiterate the Government's commitment to introduce sustainable planning legislation which will go further in protecting our delicate environment while streamlining measures to stimulate our economy, particularly our construction industry, and encouraging new investments.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment being debated today focuses on three key areas, which I will discuss in the order that they are addressed in the Bill:

1. Emergency Development Orders
2. Special Development Orders
3. Protected conservation areas

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to the Development and Planning Act 1974 provides for the Minister to activate on declaration of a national emergency procedures to allow the director to expedite the processing of a planning application and approve the application to address a crisis, provided that any such decision, while fast-tracked, must not contravene any legislative or policy directives such as building codes.

Mr. Speaker, the decision to grant such an Order will only follow the declaration of a national emergency. As the amendment makes clear, a national emergency is defined by the following: a national disaster such as a hurricane, flood, earthquake or similar natural disaster; a public health emergency declared by the Minister responsible for Health under

the Public Health Act 1949; a proclamation of emergency made by the Governor under Schedule 2 to the Bermuda Constitution Order 1968, Chapter 1, paragraph 14.

Mr. Speaker, following the declaration of an emergency, an Order shall be made based on any such representation made to the Minister and following consultation with the director. The granting of an Order will be subject to the negative resolution procedure and be advertised in the official *Gazette*. Mr. Speaker, it bears repeating that it is *not* the Minister who grants the approval for emergency development. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: It is *not* the Minister who grants approvals for emergency developments. To be abundantly clear, when the Minister issues the Emergency Development Order, it simply commences the process for the director to follow established and publicly accessible procedures to assess and make determination on developments to address a national emergency.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the same due process afforded to all of the planning applications is still applied in these cases. In fact, the director or DAB [Development Applications Board] is certainly afforded the option to refuse such an application if deemed appropriate to do so.

Mr. Speaker, it must be reiterated that the primary basis for supporting this aspect of the amendment is strictly to streamline the process where it has been deemed prudent to do so. Simply put, it allows the review and decision-making processes to be expedited for those rare emergency situations that the Island may face in the future. And as we enter the hurricane season, Mr. Speaker, I think certain things would be appropriate for us to prepare for.

The procedures to be crafted will ensure the review process is not compromised and will demonstrate compliance with all regulatory requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to discuss the impetus for the amendment regarding the granting of a Special Development Order (SDO). Through a stakeholder engagement with the development industry, concerns have been continuously expressed over the length of time taken to issue or amend Special Development Orders. Therefore, this amendment seeks to revise and mostly improve the current process to support greater efficiency while at the same time introducing internationally recognised standards.

Mr. Speaker, with the current legislation when SDOs are introduced or amended, the Minister must wait until the House sits to table an SDO. This requirement, based on the scheduling of the sittings of Parliament (i.e., the Legislature) has the probability to cause significant delay, which typically equates to economic ramifications that can undermine the viability of a development. Mr. Speaker, in today's competitive world, Bermuda cannot afford to do business inefficiently and run the risk of losing the interest of new investment. The one thing the COVID-19 pandemic

has reminded us of is that we are not immune to the consequences of international impacts. Long delays should not undermine the potential of new opportunities. It is essential that the Bermuda planning framework be [INAUDIBLE].

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative to point out that currently no procedures exist to guide the process of either issuing or amending an SDO. In previous years the Department of Planning has received queries on how to commence the process. Additionally, it has been the lack of procedures that has contributed to the perceived negative reputation of SDOs. The lack of official procedures is one key shortcoming that this amendment will address.

Mr. Speaker, currently the SDO process only allows for debate and approval by the Legislature. An SDO does not involve the review of the general public. The new amendment will allow for a more inclusive process that requires 21 days of public consultation, which provides more value and input than any process that would have ordinarily occurred presently or in the past, Mr. Speaker. Whilst a cursory review of the amendment might suggest that the decision-making has been relegated to the hands of only a few, the amendment will ensure that the public is engaged, consulted and considered in the approval of any SDO.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment introduces three key elements:

1. An SDO proposal is advertised online for a 21-day public consultation review period.
2. An environmental impact assessment is mandated.
3. The procedures are to be drafted to set out various required steps involved in the process.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only is the requirement for public consultation for 21 days, [but also] environmental impact assessment will be mandated in legislation. That does not exist now. Mr. Speaker, these three new components collectively allow for far more transparency, scrutiny and testing to be afforded to a proposal which reflects global best practice, which is currently not mandated here in Bermuda, not mandated in the current legislation and was not mandated in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm that the required procedures are in the process of being drafted for consideration, which will ultimately be available for public consumption upon approval via the negative resolution process. I would like to share some information on what the process will detail. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the procedures will detail the overall process from start to finish, from applying for an SDO until the point at which it is granted. Comprehensive details will be included on the requirement of information that must be submitted as part of the application. Such information would include, first and foremost, the necessary studies and justification provided in the form of an environmental impact statement pre-

pared following international guidelines. This would be accompanied by full details of the development scheme.

Mr. Speaker, following the receipt of the submission, the application would be advertised, allowing for the 21-day public consultation period. Procedures would then detail the review process of the proposed scheme, and accompanying supporting information in addition to all representations made by the public.

Finally, following review by technical staff, procedures would detail how a recommendation will be made to support *or not support* approval. Let me just repeat that sentence, Mr. Speaker, for those who are listening: Following review by technical staff, procedures would detail how a recommendation will be made to support *or not support* approval. It is critical to note that all such details will be publicly accessible.

Mr. Speaker, I am certain you will agree that in the drafting of these amendments, we have not sacrificed the due diligence process to ensure that development proposals are appropriately assessed in terms of social, environmental and economic impact. Instead, we have enhanced transparency and accountability by increasing the public engagement with the process, which does not exist now and did not exist before, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are ensuring that our amendment and procedures meet the requirements of the UN Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environment Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, which defines within its objectives, Mr. Speaker, the following: “(b) Contributing to the consideration of environmental, including health, concerns in the preparation of policies and legislation; (c) Establishing clear, transparent and effective procedures for strategic environmental assessment; (d) Providing for public participation in strategic environmental assessment”

For the information of the Honourable Members of this House and the general public, this document forms part of the UK document entitled “A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment” and can be found under Annex 3, Mr. Speaker, of the UK’s International Agreements to Protect or Improve the Environment. So we are guided by international best practice, Mr. Speaker, as I have repeatedly stated in my brief so far.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn your attention to the introduction of the concept of protected conservation areas. The aim of this amendment is to offer heightened protection with respect to a special protected class upon which it is believed development should not be considered. A list of areas falling within the protected class shall be referenced in the amended Act. Such areas which are subject to landowner agreement may include, Mr. Speaker, areas of high ecological value such as nature reserves, actively cultivated arable land, significantly sized swaths of wooded land, and areas supporting valuable historical and cultural access.

Mr. Speaker, it is key to understand that a development plan is policy that is created via the Development and Planning Act 1974. This amendment would ensure that these areas, once protected, are enshrined in law and can only be removed by the Legislature via the affirmative resolution procedure. Therefore, despite the cyclical changes of development plans, these protected areas will be just that—protected. Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable House and members of the public that landowners have already expressed interest and commitment to have their land added to this list. These landowners recognise the added value of having such areas [listed] affords greater levels of protection.

Mr. Speaker, I must also point out that the provision of enabling areas of particular value to be protected can be utilised as an additional planning tool. In the future, negotiations of development projects, as in other jurisdictions, planners employ negotiation techniques to secure positive planning benefits in exchange for supporting development proposals. In effect, through this amendment, we can secure at a more substantive level environmental benefits for the country at large.

Mr. Speaker, now that I have explained the legislation, I would like to respond to comments that we have seen appear in the media in recent days. Mr. Speaker, some have asked why the amendment to protect certain conservation land areas is important. They claim that there is adequate protection in zoning of the land under the development planning process. While it is true that a development plan involves established zones for land, these zones are vulnerable to change either by the recurring development plan review process, commonly referred to as *zoning objection* process, or via approval for development granted on appeal to the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, it has been alleged that the introduction of conservation areas weakens the level of protection afforded via the existing system provided for by the Bermuda Plan 2018. Additionally, it is claimed that by the introduction of protected conservation areas, it infers that the areas already zoned for conservation—

The Speaker: Minister. Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister, if you do not mind, it is now 12:30. And if you would like to have us pause and we can come back after lunch?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: But, Mr. Speaker, if you can I am not that far from finishing.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: If I can finish my opening statement, because sort of to not finish would be disjointed.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: The reason I interrupted you was to find out how further along you are. How much more do you have?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I have not much more left, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. With the indulgence, we are going to allow you to finish, and then we will break.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House for obliging. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, additionally (and I will continue) this claim that, by the introduction of the protected areas, it infers that the areas already zoned for conservation are somehow more available for development than originally intended. This is untrue, and I would cite as an example the Bermuda National Parks Act 1986, which protects those nature reserves and parks that are public lands. This amendment offers the same protection to privately owned land.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who have gone to the media to, frankly, accuse me of having nefarious reasons for overturning decisions of the Development Applications Board (the DAB). Mr. Speaker, I find these accusations absurd. However, I would be remiss to not address them. Please note that at my assistance, 99 per cent of appeals to the Minister are reviewed first by the independent inspector, [who is] hired outside of Bermuda and is eminently qualified and has no conflict of interest. In addition, the DAB must refuse applications, for example, when applications are not zoned for the purposes outlined in the application or when someone is making a retroactive application. This must come to the Minister on appeal even if the DAB and/or technical officers are supportive of the application.

In addition, third parties are allowed to appeal an application even when approved by the DAB. Third-party appeals often made by environmental groups are considered by the Minister. And there are instances when those appeals are upheld.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will address concerns related to SDOs. It has been alleged that this Bill will result in (quote) "secret deals" being made without public input. I can state categorically that this assertion is untrue, totally untrue. Our procedures will reflect the notification to the public but will also include the procedures for responding to valid objections and amending the SDO as necessary. However, I must remind Honourable Members and the public that de-

bating these Bills in the House does not necessarily allow the public input or highlight the deficiencies in the Order.

By way of example, I would like to highlight two issues that occurred or that commenced in a former Administration, which did not provide the opportunity for any public input. Firstly, the St. George's Resort Act 2018 gave an in-principle planning permission for a hotel and residential development, et cetera, with no public involvement, consultation or advice, or advice from technical officers within the Department of Planning. This Act resulted in an outcry from the residents in St. George's complaining about the use of the beach. More importantly, the development also garnered attention from a local historic entity. Even more worrying, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the approved development, UNESCO has since threatened to place the World Heritage status of Fort St. George's in danger of being removed.

As another example, Mr. Speaker, there was also the approval on appeal for a roadway through actively cultivated land for the Morgan's Point development, which was issued without public input or support of the department's technical officers.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, the proposed amendment to this Act forms a key element of the streamlining measures initiated, originally announced in May 2019, to bring greater efficiency to the Planning Department's processes and service delivery to the public and ultimately to provide a conducive regulatory framework to support new investment while protecting our environmental assets.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Director of Planning and the Department of Planning under the leadership of Ms. Victoria Pereira, and her team for the work on this matter. And also, in the AG's Chambers, Ms. Amani Lawrence, Parliamentary Counsel, who drafted the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister? Is the Premier there? Would either one of you like to move us to lunch?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch, to return back at 2:00 pm, 2:00 or 2:05, whichever one is best.

The Speaker: Yes, 2:00 pm will be fine.

Hon. E. David Burt: Two o'clock.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any objections to that?

No objections. The House stands adjourned to 2:00 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:36 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Members, it is now 2:00 pm. We will resume the House after [having had our] lunch.

When we ended the Minister of Home Affairs had presented his presentation on the first item on today's Order, which is the Development and Planning [Amendment] Act 2021. He concluded his presentation before we went for lunch and now I will open the floor for any other Member who wishes to make a contribution at this time.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, MP Richardson.

The Speaker: MP, you have the floor.

BILL**SECOND READING****DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

[Continuation of debate thereon]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to start by thanking the Honourable Minister for bringing this legislation to the House of Assembly, as well as his leadership team for the work that they have done on it. I am not aware of . . . I was not aware of the name of the person in the Attorney General's Chambers who worked on it, but I would like to extend my thanks to her as well.

The Minister, Mr. Speaker, had actually offered to brief me on this legislation and I wanted to thank him for that opportunity as well.

My comments, Mr. Speaker, will focus primarily on a concern that is raised within the legislation that the Minister was at pains to speak to, but I, nonetheless, will raise them and hope to . . . or rather, I urge him to change direction on this piece of legislation, which contains quite a lot of good ideas. It contains a lot of proposals that will clarify and ensure the process on a going forward basis. It is fair. It introduces things, as he raised. It introduces things that simply were not present before. And for that he should be commended. But I do think that it contains one key and crucial flaw, which would otherwise pull down a very well-thought-out piece of legislation.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I must first speak or at least inform the membership in the public to what we are actually talking about in this legislation. Because a special development order, Mr. Speaker, is a very dry topic until it is not. Up until there is actually a special development order winding its way through the processes in Bermuda, this is a piece of bureaucratic

procedure that has little to no impact to people on a day-to-day basis. And to that end, I found the topic quite dry until I had to research it. And then I got to see what has happened in our past as it relates to these special development orders and how they have been used.

The point of the special development order really does start in the Bermuda Plan. And the Honourable Minister brought the Bermuda Plan to the House of Assembly in May 2021. And in that document, it outlines quite a few salient points to this debate. The Ministerial Statement of 21 May [2021] . . . and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will be referring to notes so occasionally you will see me glancing off to the side.

The Speaker: Yes, you can refer to them, yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The five key goals of the Bermuda Plan are to conserve open space and protect the Island's natural and built heritage. The second of the five goals is to provide sufficient development potential to meet the community's needs. The third key goal is to facilitate community improvements in neighbourhoods to create better, healthier and safer places to live and visit. Four is to encourage more efficient and sustainable use and development of land and buildings. And number five key goal of the Bermuda Plan is to ensure a high quality of design and accessibility of all new developments.

Now, this Bermuda Plan, Mr. Speaker, is a binding document. In other words, Bermuda must be developed in accordance with this Plan. And this Plan, although in legislation may be done every five years, in practice, due to costs and resources, my understanding is that it is done every 10 to 15 years. So, this is our very considered, exhaustive Plan, to wit, I point out, the Bermuda Plan itself, or rather the Summary Report, was some 200 pages. And the tribunal reports, which is how they contest how objectors and counter-objectors can bring their thoughts on the Bermuda Plan to the attention of the Tribunal and the Minister's [Plan], is some 700 pages, Mr. Speaker.

That Plan went through three and a half months of public consultation, with 457 objections and counter-objections, including a tribunal of three paid persons, professionals, including three alternates. And it was a lengthy, costly and thorough exercise. And it is intended to bind us and guide us in the development of Bermuda and the deployment of our resources to ensure those five goals that the Minister spoke to on 21 May.

Now, a key piece in understanding what a special development order is, to be blunt, it is an exemption from the Bermuda Plan. Despite all of that work, the special development order is that there is a national interest, and through some sort of deliberation the Minister has concluded that the parts of the

Bermuda Plan that would otherwise bind and prevent this development are to be overridden, for all intents and purposes, with the special development order.

Now, this comes with a lot of controversy, Mr. Speaker, just the topic in and of itself. An informative document that I read was given to the House of Assembly in ¹2012, which is the 96-page special report entitled “[Today’s Choices Tomorrow’s Costs] The Ombudsman for Bermuda’s Systemic Investigation into the Process and Scope of Analysis for Special Development Orders.”

In it, the Ombudsman points out how the use of SDOs has evolved over time from national projects to national priorities. She points out that the proposed (for example) Southlands SDO and the Tucker’s Point SDO—it has a great phrase here, Mr. Speaker, I thought. She said is “heavy with emotion and light on evidence.”

And this goes towards the Minister’s point about there being a lack of a formal process in previous years. So, where there is no process, there is an overwhelming amount of personal interpretation of the events. And we have courted controversy through the use of SDOs, even though they are there for our national interests, they come along and they have been unguided. And to that end, again, I commend the Minister for trying to put some parameters on it. And they actually did this, though, Mr. Speaker. But let me speak to—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, we will take your point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure that the Honourable Member does not mislead the House or the public to paint SDOs in a light that is not consistent with actual practice and reality. Special development orders are creatures of the Act, just as the Bermuda Development Plan is a creature of the legislation. It is a part of the lawful legislation of the land. Special development orders are not an aberration to allow people to go outside the law. And the Member implied that in what he said. And that needs to be clear, that special development orders are a creature of the same legislation as the Bermuda Development Plan.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Member, just be mindful of the Minister’s intervention.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I disagree, I certainly do not, I would never . . . yes, but I can . . . yes. I can 100 per cent agree that it is contained within the same piece of legislation, and it is a legislative instrument. It is a utility. But that, in and of itself, does not mean that it did not have controversy in its use. And that is my point here. We are talking about the controversy surrounding the use of special development orders.

And it is susceptible to the perception of back-dealing, especially, Mr. Speaker. The reason is—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Walter H. Roban: The Honourable Member is giving implications here that suggest that the special development order is a tool of something not . . . not . . . not proper to the law. And that is a false implication and it suggests that special development orders are used in nefarious ways. I challenge the Honourable Member to name a specific case where a special development order did something that was found to be contrary or ethically incorrect.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the law in and of itself does not bind us, is not sacrosanct in that everything that takes place within it is—

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

Mr. Jarion Richardson: —exactly ethical and moral.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member, I know, is new, but he certainly must realise he is misleading the Honourable House of Assembly by saying that the laws which this House passes do not bind us.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I wanted to finish that point, which might help the Honourable Premier.

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Many laws have been in effect . . . and we are not saying that about this one, but for some time slavery was legal and we can all agree that that was not ethical.

So, I am trying to get to the point here, Mr. Speaker, that there is some controversy around special development orders. And the point I am making

¹¹ *Official Hansard Report*, 18 May 2012, page 2085

here is that there is a perception of backroom dealing. It is susceptible to the perception of backroom dealing. I am certainly not specifying that Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so on a certain date did a certain thing that was illegal. That is not what I am saying, although I am sure this topic will come up later on.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why special development orders can raise these perceptions is because of the vast amounts of money that are concerned in them—millions of dollars in investments, in the purchase and sale of property, in loans and fees. Also, given the absence of procedure in the past, multiple stakeholders in this process are involved at any point. And you can not only think of the on Island advisers, but undoubtedly, you can think of all of the investors, the attorneys, the chartered surveyors, the persons who conduct the economic impact assessments, so there are a lot of people involved. There is a lot of money involved.

And projects are, given the volume, given the public perception, given how much attention they get, they are . . . they are also quite political when they come up in topic, both in public debate and in this House of Assembly, this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker.

They are used to facilitate the performance of national goals, such as increasing jobs. So, again, just a lot of weight. And these projects have a great deal of prestige associated with them, Mr. Speaker. I think there are none of us in Bermuda who are not familiar with the sight of a Government Minister shovelling dirt in front of something or the other or pouring rum on the top of a building.

So, what we are talking about here is that there is a lot of importance associated with them, there is a lot of money, and and to that end, they are, in fact, a mechanism to enable . . . a legal mechanism, following on from the Minister's earlier point of order. They are, in fact, a legal mechanism by which to bring about something which was contrary to the Bermuda Plan as it stood at that time. So, big gambles, big returns with a lot to lose.

And the Honourable Minister in 2011 actually put some work into this space, adding transparency by way of making the special development order a statutory instrument and, thus, subject to public scrutiny; adding an affirmative resolution procedure; and enabling the legislature (and by the way, I am using his words) ²“enabling the legislature to fully consider and debate all the permissions and conditions to be attached to a Special Development Order.”

Now, this enabled all kinds of transparency for Parliament, the Legislature, and others. This was . . . so of use that the Ombudsman in her 2012 report, which was called “Today's Choices Tomorrow's Costs,” reported to the House . . . said that she “applauds the 2011 amendment to the Development and

Planning Act 1974 that requires SDOs to be approved by the Legislature . . .” So, it was a gap that was remediated, and [it] now stands that our scrutiny, the parliamentary scrutiny, is how we attend to risks that manifest themselves by virtue of the special development order and what it can do.

Now, in this amendment, what we are looking at is (reading from the top of the amendment Bill) “to provide for development orders to be made by the negative resolution procedure rather than the affirmative resolution procedure.” And simply put, affirmative procedure means that both Houses have to . . . or sorry, it means that we have to positively approve before the special development order comes into law. And that is our parliamentary scrutiny that we talk about all the time. The negative resolution procedure means that the Minister will sign and it comes into law and then it comes to the House.

Now, the Honourable Minister spoke to the reason for this change on 2 July [2021] in his Ministerial Statement wherein he said, Mr. Speaker, “this amendment seeks to revise the current process to support greater efficiency while maintaining rigorous standards,” and he, the Minister, added that one of the reasons for this is that greater efficiency and that “the Minister must wait until the House sits to table an SDO.” So, the singular premise is to support greater efficiency.

Now, we are balancing that greater efficiency with the weight of parliamentary scrutiny. And so, what is being proposed here is that we would withdraw parliamentary scrutiny to enable greater efficiency. Now, it is not that simple. The Act does include—

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 when he says “withdraw the parliamentary scrutiny.” The Honourable Member does know that under the Statutory Instruments Act all statutory instruments which are made by a Minister are subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and any House of the Legislature by majority vote can cause those matters to be revoked. So, parliamentary scrutiny does apply.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Continue, Member.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, when we are talking about the positive affirmation procedure, we are obviously talking about there being a vote taking place before anything happens—not after.

² *Official Hansard Report*, 4 February 2011, page 465

The Minister had said that we are going to maintain rigorous standards. And I believe what he is speaking to there is that the legislation provides for the development of very specific, clear, and public procedures, which would include a 21-day consultation when all of the documents relating to this SDO would be available for public review. And so, the proposition is as I pointed out before.

Now, in principle, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about this in principle and in practice. Because in principle this is . . . this procedure is a good idea. The Ombudsman noted in her 2012 report that there was no proper process for gathering information, “the data available to inform analysis and decision-making was inadequate.”

It further goes on to say that “The failure of a proper public consultation process resulted in ad hoc, adversarial airing of public concerns.” So, no reasonable person could object to adding clarity and regularity to this process.

But the challenge that we face here, Mr. Speaker, is that the procedures are not ready and they are not being brought to this House along with this amendment. I note that the procedures, by the way, are subject to negative resolution. So, much like an SDO, they will arrive in the House before positive affirmation. The Honourable Minister actually spoke to this by saying our procedures *will*, implying that there is a future to take place and there is going to be some development of these procedures that are not here today.

One of the questions that I have for the Minister is, for example, even though there will be procedures, will those be subject to an appeal? Will that appeal go to the Minister, which would effectively reintroduce a kind of exclusive or absolute control over the SDOs?

Now, there is some . . . I wanted to bring up the point that the Minister had made—the singular premise—that this is about efficiency. Because, insofar as I have read, been made aware, and spoken to folks, the House can be and has been called back in the past to attend to SDOs. In fact, there was a comment in the Ombudsman’s report about how the SDO debate for Tucker’s Point—although I cannot speak to which specific debate—was scheduled during the Budget Debate. And, as we are all well aware, the Budget Debate is not exactly an easy time for any of us. It takes quite a lot of research. And so, for something to be brought up during that time, we are kind of in the middle of something else. So, clearly, that . . . we can bring the House back and SDOs can be dealt with.

But most are mindful that quicker is not always better, Mr. Speaker. I do not think any carpenter would tell you that you just throw up the cabinets. Measure twice and cut once. And, given the weight of what we are contending with, given the value of what we are contending with, it strikes me that projects of

these types, of this scale of national interest, should be subject to . . . should not be expedited in such a manner. They should be moving a lot slower than any other project. For example, in this case, we are . . . these are not things that we can undo. So, I do just appreciate that maybe this is a time that we slow things down a little bit instead of speed them up.

But with that said, the singular premise is the greater efficiencies. And with that being said, I want to bring this to a summation, Mr. Speaker. If reducing the role of the House—which is what we are considering right now—is premised on greater efficiencies—and I do not necessarily agree with that, but I take the point that this is what we are entertaining—I do not see how the House can concur without seeing the procedures which will ensure the transparency, clarity and the rigidity of the process that was introduced when the Honourable Minister in 2011 brought in the affirmative resolution procedure for SDOs.

We are opening a gap in our good governance. And that gap can be plugged with these procedures. I would hope that we would have a chance to scrutinise those procedures so that we know what we are swapping out for another thing.

This legislation without those procedures will diminish and weaken the people’s ability to hold power to account. And the MPs who permit this, we have to be very careful here. When I go back to my constituents and they ask me, *Why did you alter that process? Why did you remove the affirmative resolution procedure? Why have you enabled this change? We are going to say ‘because it made it faster and better.’*

This strikes me as . . . we are risking the reintroduction of all of the things that we associate with bygone political errors, all of the things that we speak about to one another, that we concern ourselves with, that . . . and certainly during any kind of major political event, like an election, we throw around quite casually. We seem to be risking that reintroduction.

So, we almost go from national projects to national priorities to national vanities. And I think that if we had the procedures in place, if we knew what the controls would be, then this amendment would be more palatable. And I think the individual MPs who permit this would be doing more than rubber stamping. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister of Education, it looks like you are trying to get my attention.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, that is me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And welcome to colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, you know, from the discussions that we have heard coming from the Opposition and others in the community, you would think that this Bill is only about SDOs. It is actually about a few other really critical things. And the speaker who just took his seat did not indicate whether they support or they understand or even that they comprehend what else is happening with this particular Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the potential of introducing the Emergency Order portion is something that is sorely needed. I, for myself, have wondered why for years we did not have the ability to enact, to expedite planning permission for when there are disasters that happen to Bermuda. I mean, we are going through a pandemic right now, but we have a hurricane season every year that, you know, when we are unlucky, causes devastation. Why not have something in place that allows for expedited planning approval to help people in those particular circumstances? Why is that not being spoken to, Mr. Speaker?

When we talk about the protection of conservation areas, this is critically important as well. You have people screaming about, *Bermuda needs to save our open space. Bermuda needs to save this and save that*, especially when it comes to our environment. That is part of this Bill as well. But, again, we do not seem to hear that coming from the other side or their supporters. They just keep talking about the SDOs. But we will get to the SDOs later, because when we talk about the protection of conservation areas, we are actually introducing something that enhances the SDO process.

And I would actually like to speak to that as well. Ironically, we are here discussing this and, as I said, the conversation is being laser-focused on SDOs, but this particular part—the protected conservation area—will actually enhance the previous SDO, the last one, at Riddell's Bay, one that was approved by this House, but was unable to [do] things like protect the conservation area. So, with the approval of the owners of that property, we can create even more conservation areas in that particular property, something that could not be done under the former way the SDO [was done].

So, when everyone says, *Well, why are we changing policy? What is the big deal?* Mr. Speaker, it has been 10 years since that last policy had been put in place. Surely things have changed since then. Surely, we are in a different space than what we were back then. So, what was applicable then is not necessarily applicable now. And that is what I want to hear the other side articulate. Why shouldn't we move towards a regime that provides more flexibility, that pro-

vides the opportunity to create economic development within our country at a faster pace?

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I remember when we were doing Plan 2022—the Strategic Plan for Education. And I was talking to Dr. Newell, who was the person helping us with that. He told me something that will live in my mind . . . that has always lived in my mind. And he said, *People aren't afraid of change; they're afraid of not being in control anymore*. And that is where we really are right now. People are afraid of not being in control.

Making decisions such as this and moving the Island forward requires firm leadership, requires us to do the things that need to be done despite, sometimes, the opposition that may come. There are times when we have to do the types of things that we are doing, despite the opposition, because we know it is the right thing to do. But we understand what the Opposition's playbook is. They are desperate; they want to play to public fears. They want to create a popularity contest by pandering for votes. That is really what [they] are doing. That is really all that they are doing right now. Often, as a country, we are being accused of not staying up to scratch.

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

The Speaker: Do not worry, Member, I was just about to have a conversation with the Minister.

Mr. Scott Pearman I would be grateful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister, be mindful that every Member has a right to express themselves here. They come the same way that we all got here, to voice opinions of those that do not have a voice up here. We may not all agree . . . we may not always agree, but they have the right to express themselves.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I will be guided by you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that.

But Mr. Speaker, we cannot be afraid to make changes. We have to move forward. You know, it actually struck me as really odd . . . really, really humorous, when I was thinking about this, right? And the complaints about *why are we making this change?* And the disrespectful comments about my ministerial colleague, Minister Roban, about, *Well, he said that 10 years ago, why is he changing his mind now?*

What short memories we have, Mr. Speaker. I remember an upstart political party campaigning in 2012 that they would not scrap term limits. They surprisingly won the election and within a month term limits were gone. They changed their mind, and, Mr. Speaker, they said *this is what leadership is*.

Mr. Speaker, we have that same party that campaigned on having a referendum about gambling. They changed their mind and did not have a referen-

dum; they went ahead with it and said *this is what leadership is*. But Mr. Speaker, this is what leadership is, moving forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Premier pointed out to the Member who sat down before me, this does not remove parliamentary scrutiny. A negative resolution has to be tabled in the House. And any Member who wishes to pick it up for debate, can pick it up for debate. Perhaps the One Bermuda Alliance remembers their woeful, their absolutely dreadful record of not tabling negative resolutions—for years, in some cases—and they are thinking that this party will run from parliamentary scrutiny like they did. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. This will be submitted as per the rules, and it will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny, if a Member wants to take it up to debate. It is a simple process.

What we are doing is enhancing the SDO process, which the speaker before me did agree to. It is being enhanced. There are things being put in place to ensure that there is public scrutiny, to ensure that there are proper processes when it comes to environmental impact studies, when it comes to the economic impact studies, when it comes to the social studies. All of that will be in place now, something that did not exist before.

So, when we talk about what has changed, Mr. Speaker. [This is what] has changed. A framework will now be introduced that governs how SDOs are scrutinised. But there is more than that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the SDO will be scrutinised by technical officers at the Department of Planning, it will be subject to environmental impact assessments, it will be subject to all sorts of reports, it will be subject to public scrutiny. But then we are still hearing, *But it must come here so we can then second-guess all of the experts that have put together their opinions*. Why do we need to do that, Mr. Speaker, unless we absolutely have to? And if we absolutely have to, anyone can take up the debate, or the negative resolution, point blank. And if the negative resolution is voted down, that SDO will be rescinded. A simple process. It absolutely makes sense to me, and it absolutely should make sense to the public. It is just a matter of explaining it. It is a matter of who wants to spin it the way they want it to be spun.

Mr. Speaker, in order for us to move forward, in order for us to do the things that need to be done to promote economic activity in this Island, to promote sustained development in this Island, we all have to make critical decisions, we all have to look at the future. This is future-forward thinking. And I appreciate the Minister for having the wherewithal to bring this before us today, knowing what he said 10 years ago, knowing that he would probably get Members out there that would bash and want to go back to that and say, *Look what you've done. Look what you've done*.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was reading the news report for one of the detractors to this partic-

ular Bill, it was interesting, and I quote, Mr. Speaker (and this is from the ³*Royal Gazette*), if you will allow me, it says “BEST urged the public to oppose the changes, saying: ‘Bermudians must have a say before the Government is allowed to “pave over paradise!””

Mr. Speaker, Bermudians did not have a say in the last process, but they have one now by public consultation. So, when we read statements like that, Mr. Speaker, that gives you an idea of the mentality that we are working with. And it goes back to what I just said—and I repeat this because I want people to be taking it to heart—*people do not fear change; they fear not being in control*. And Mr. Speaker, these people have been in control for so long that they have not even realised that they are not even there anymore and that we have to move on, do the things we need to do, increase economic activity in this Island, improve the stock of the people in this Island, making sure that they have a piece of the pie as we move forward, and not be concerned about [the] people with special interests that wish to opine because they are no longer in control.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have reviewed the legislation, and I will admit there are improvements. We had a very productive meeting with the leadership of the Planning Department yesterday. It was very enlightening. So, I would like to thank them for making themselves available for this information-gathering initiative.

I would be less than responsible to say that I did not agree with the published procedures that they are implementing for the issuance of emergency development orders, SDOs, and protective conservation sites. I think, if we have proper procedures in place, then everybody would have a clearer idea in regard to expectations and how things will be managed by the Government. And so, it will protect the Government and it will better protect our investors, our developers, and they know what to expect and what time frame. So, I will support that.

So, I am not going to be critical of everything in this legislation, and I do not believe that the Shadow Minister was critical about everything that was

³ *Royal Gazette*, 10 July 2021

presented. The biggest contention, as I heard it from the Shadow Minister, was the negative resolution, but I will get to that shortly.

I am not going to be very long, but a few issues jumped out at me. When the Minister was presenting his brief, he indicated that the stakeholders had told him that it would take a long time to issue SDOs, and the primary reason for the delay was Parliament, based on parliamentary scheduling. And, in his mind, in the developer's mind, timing is of the essence. Mr. Speaker, I agree that timing is of the essence. But I will not sit here and allow that Minister to blame Parliament for the timeliness of the SDOs.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that over the years we have been called back to the House whenever there was a matter of national importance. We were called back for the Hotels Concession Act [2000]—one hotel concession was tabled and we came back and debated it. We have come back before for SDOs during the summer break. So, to say that Parliament is responsible for delaying SDOs is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. The Premier of the day—I am not saying the current Premier, the Premier of the day—and his Cabinet have the authority to call back Parliament whenever they want. And if it is an issue of national importance, then call the Parliament back and our parliamentarians will be here. So, to me, it is totally irresponsible to blame Parliament for the delay in the issuance of SDOs. And to me, it is irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I would like to speak to, and it was touched upon earlier, and the Minister of Education just spoke about how things evolved from 2011 when the Minister presented and amended the legislation to have SDOs changed from a negative resolution to a positive resolution. Well, 10 years ago was not July 2020 when we did the Riddell's Bay SDO. At that time, in July 2020, which was just a year ago, the Minister underscored the fact that the special SDO order provides a framework that ensures absolute transparency and we would debate it in the House, especially on issues and matters of national interest.

And so, what has happened since then? One year has transpired. Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago he supported the move from negative resolution to affirmative resolution. He endorsed it last year, and one year later he wants to take it back. The Minister wants to take it back to negative resolution. What will he do next year? Will he bring it back to—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: —positive resolution next year, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Point of order, point of order.

We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: The Honourable Member is misleading the House that somehow we are rolling legislation back. We are not. I was very clear in my brief. We are enhancing and advancing this legislation going forward and we are keeping in the due diligence and controls which are required. He seems to believe that we are running willy-nilly like his Government did—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, that gentleman is misleading the House. As I said, I have supported the procedures, the due diligence that they have implemented. I am not addressing that. I am addressing the issue of moving backwards and forwards from negative resolution to positive resolution, back to negative resolution.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Again, what will it be next year?

The Speaker: Okay, thank you both for clarifying your points. Just be considerate of what was said by both and just go on with your presentation.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What will it be next year?

And so, how can the community feel that they are really committed to this transparency if they are going backwards and forwards like some yo-yo, Mr. Speaker?

So, one questions the reason. Because if it was good enough for last year and the Minister made the commitment to change it from negative resolution to affirmative resolution last year, I mean 10 years ago, the question is, What is driving this? It surely is not Parliament slowing things up, as the Minister has said, because as I rebutted, quite frankly, Parliament can be called any time for national issues. Any time. The Minister knows it and the Premier knows it.

So, to have Parliament responsible for the timeliness of the issuance of these SDOs is totally unconscionable, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will move on to another area right now. The Minister spoke to the national emergency development order. And what jumped to mind, for me, when he spoke to that . . . and I am sympathetic to that decision. I cannot say that I would rule it out. I am sympathetic to it. What jumps to mind, for me, is the situation that we had at Mangrove Lake and Tank Hill whereby we, after a hurricane, went to the hillside and took out slate. Now, I am sympathetic to our Bermudians and the challenges that we face during hurricanes, and I know that for years people have lost their roofs and that there is a challenge with securing slate. And sometimes we have to make dra-

matic decisions in Government. I accept that and so I am not totally against this. What I would ask the Minister to do is provide details on when we have to make these dramatic changes to our landscape, like going in and quarrying a hillside, what remedial action can we have that will help the environment after we have addressed our challenges?

So, right now we have a great big scar on the hillside down at Mangrove Lake where we went in and quarried. What remedial action . . . what remedial plan has the Government put in place to make that site more environmentally friendly and more positive from a sustainability point of view? And so, my question on these emergency development orders, yes, we can have them, but what are we going to do after to remediate and support the environment in those orders?

To me, they should form an integral part of the order. And so, that was another issue that I thought I would share with the community because the Mangrove Lake scar, you can see it every time you drive along that area of Southshore. You look over and you see the scar on the hillside. And I said that is shameful. I understand why it was done and I am sympathetic, but Government could have put together a remedial plan to make that area more environmentally sustainable and something that we can be proud of. I am inviting the Government to have remediation plans should they issue these national emergency development orders. Do not just scar the property and leave it forever because, to me, that is irresponsible.

On the issue of the protected conservation areas, again, it is interesting that for those we have an affirmative resolution and for everything else [we do] not. And I take the view that a private person may make a commitment to conservation in this area because they have arable land or woodland or natural reserves on their property. Again, I take the view that it should, of course, come to Parliament. And, likewise, all the other amendments should also come to Parliament—[I mean] the SDOs and the emergency orders. As I said, Parliament cannot be blamed for the tardiness in such situations.

As I said earlier on the issue of the protected conservation areas, I heard very little on mangroves. The mangroves, as you know, play a vital role in our—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Point of clarification, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, point of order.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: If the Member will yield?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I will yield.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Would the Member not agree, Mr. Speaker, that waiting for Parliament to convene

rather quickly could actually interrupt or interfere with the quick response to an emergency situation?

So, to have Parliament come back to approve an emergency response would actually potentially put lives and property at risk?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not buy that argument.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I have been in this Parliament for 22 years, and I have been given two-day notice to get back to Parliament to do a tourism order or an SDO, previously. So, do not present that argument to this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think those are my issues. Like I said, generally, I agree in that the operational procedures make sense from a business point of view, from a best practice point of view. I understand it was started under the former Minister, the late Honourable Walton Brown, and he has been dead for a number of years so I am delighted, actually, that it is coming forward. I cannot question the consultation that they have included in there. So, I am not totally against it. There are certain features I cannot live with.

And on those few comments, Mr. Speaker, that is all . . . I am just double-checking my notes to make sure I have covered everything. That is it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, MP Pearman.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I heard two voices.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I think it was the Premier, I will defer.

The Speaker: Premier? Premier, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. E. David Burt: I will defer, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: If no one wants to speak, we can have the Minister reply . . . respond and take us into committee.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am happy to go, I was going to let the Premier speak first and defend his Bill.

The Speaker: Okay. We need either one of you to take the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Go ahead, Scott.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would—

The Speaker: Mr. Pearman, MP Pearman?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I was intending to speak very, very briefly about this Bill. And I was intending to do so in what I hoped would be an even-handed and fair manner. And the reason for my intent is there is much about this Bill that I like. There is much about this Bill that I would commend. Where I was perhaps a bit surprised, Mr. Speaker, is when we heard from the Honourable Member of Cabinet, the Minister for Education, who, having heard but one speaker from the Opposition, leapt up and ascribed motives to us that were improper and did lots of spin and politicisation that was entirely unnecessary. Without having heard the Opposition speakers, without having heard the Opposition Leader, without having heard me or anyone else, it was suddenly that no one in the Opposition even concedes the benefits of the Bill. Well, that is utter nonsense, Mr. Speaker, because we do.

We like the ability to preserve land with the consent of landowners. That is an excellent addition to our legislative agenda in this area. And I am very happy to commend the Minister for that aspect of this Bill. We like the idea that the public are consulted in matters such as this, as they should be. That is what democracy is about. It is about listening to the people.

So, why the Education Minister felt the need to come in and start spinning so close to Cup Match, is beyond me. But for him to say—and I am quoting this because I wrote it down, Mr. Speaker—that *the Opposition don't understand the Bill*. Well, that is just rude. And frankly, Minister, I think I do understand it.

The Minister for Education also explained what the issue is for him and, by extension, we anticipate it is the issue for the Government. He said that this is about control. Well, how sad. How sad that decisions are being made based upon who has got the right to decide who is in control.

Decisions, Mr. Speaker, should be about what is best for Bermuda, what is best for our Island, and what is best for all of us. Decisions should be by the elected representatives of the people, those of us in Parliament. And when the Honourable Minister who spoke before me suggests that the criticism of the Opposition, and, indeed, others—not just the Opposition, those members of the public, those charitable agencies such as BEST, National Trust, Audubon Society—were “laser-focused on the SDO issue” well, of course! And we make no apology for that. That is where everyone’s laser-focus should be. And I am surprised that we have not heard, so far, from 28 oth-

er sitting Members of Parliament in this House on the other side.

Again, this Bill is not necessarily a bad Bill; on the whole it is very positive. But it has one element that is significantly detrimental to democracy and to the way that planning and decision-making occurs on our Island. And that is the removal of the affirmative resolution procedure, the removal of the ability to bring an SDO to Parliament so that Parliament can debate it. I mean, you have got 30 seats, why are you afraid of a debate?

The Minister who presented the Bill explained that the reason for this was because of historic SDO occasions where they were not able to move swiftly enough. (And I am paraphrasing; this is my language, not his.) But they were not able to move swiftly enough and therefore lost the benefit of the development. He cited the Tucker Point Club in 2018. Well, it is a weak argument in any event, Mr. Speaker, but it is also a completely hollow one because, of course, Tucker’s Point got built. Tucker’s Point is here. There was not any reason why Parliament should be the blame for losing the possibility of Tucker’s Point when it is sitting up there in the East End.

And the suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that you and your House are to blame, that you and your House delay the approval of SDOs is absolute nonsense. Parliament can be recalled at the drop of a hat. We are only sitting, on most occasions, every other two weeks. And you have, and previously have, recalled us at short notice, quite rightly so, many times. So, respectfully, for the Minister to blame Parliament is a fig leaf full of holes.

Mr. Speaker, I noted that the Honourable Minister jumped in to defend himself when the Opposition Leader referred to certain statements that he made in the past. It is difficult. I accept, it is difficult in politics, where your words are often reported, to be consistent and not to be in a position where what you say one day gets thrown back against you on another day. I am afraid that hypocrisy is one of the by-products of politics because, often, positions change. And I accept that, and the Honourable Minister pointed out that situations change.

Yet, with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the *Official Hansard Report* of 17 July 2020.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: This was our debate on the SDO for Riddell’s Bay. And those who participated in that debate may recall that, in fact, the Opposition, in certain instances, was supportive of the Minister’s proposals. But he said this—and this is Walter Roban, the Minister—

“Mr. Speaker, please allow me to fast forward to the present day where the rightful method to approve such a scheme is via a Special Development

Order (SDO), a framework that ensures absolute transparency through debate in the House. It is important to note that an SDO is a form of planning permission, lawful planning permission under section 15 of the Development and Planning Act 1974, and is granted when the development is considered to be in the national interest, perhaps also termed the public interest.” [page 4449]

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister was right then and this Bill is wrong now in this narrow respect. He was right that when we are dealing with SDOs, we are dealing with matters of the public interest, we are dealing with matters of the national interest, and that is why it is so important that these matters come to this House for a proper debate before they are decided. *Before* they are decided. And that is a legitimate issue to take up in respect of this Bill. And if someone took a red pen and crossed out the words “negative resolution procedure” and wrote in “affirmative resolution procedure” you would have my vote on this Bill.

So, I do not contest the whole Bill. I just do not like the fact that we are watering down parliamentary scrutiny. Because it is Parliament that is supposed to be the brakes on the runaway train of Government. It is Parliament—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: —who review the laws—

The Speaker: Point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I will, again, as the other Member did in a previous part of this debate, point out the misleading statement the Honourable Member has made is that even negative resolutions that are laid in the House are subject to parliamentary scrutiny as well. So, parliamentary scrutiny is not being avoided. That is the implication and assertion by Members of the Opposition, including the Honourable Member who is speaking now, and it is incorrect.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Member, just be mindful of the Minister’s intervention.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am grateful for the Minister’s intervention. And as he well knows, that is a load of tosh.

The reason we have it come to Parliament for debate is so that Parliament can decide. It is not for the Minister or the Board or the [INAUDIBLE] to decide, these are very important issues.

It is rare that this Parliament is dealing with issues as important as major SDOs. Why are they so

important? Mr. Speaker, they are important because once they are done, they are largely irreversible. They are largely permanent. And that is why the elected representatives of Bermuda should debate them first. That is why democracy should be put up on a pillar and should benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I have referred the House to what the Honourable Minister said in July 2020. I give him the benefit of the doubt that it is not often easy in this job to be entirely consistent, but we have seen a complete 180, a complete *volte-face*. And again, he was right then and he is wrong now. And again, lest it be said that we are being political and obstructive, if he were to change negative to affirmative, he has my vote on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we were told by the Cabinet Minister who spoke after the Minister presented the Bill, “this is what leadership is.” And then he talked about those who oppose their position and referred to it as “spin.” Well, I understand the game of politics and I understand why it is the Government’s job to bash the Opposition, and it is the Opposition’s job to bash the Government sometimes. But it is not like that all the time. And where we can be bipartisan in the best interests of Bermuda, we should be. And it is not just the Opposition that has issues with this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet Minister I referred to attacked the motives of BEST. BEST is hardly a vehicle for the OBA. In addition, Mr. Speaker, again with your leave, we have a public statement by the Bermuda National Trust. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, let me just quote from this.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

⁴“The most concerning amendment is a proposal that will remove the ability of Parliament to debate and vote on Special Development Orders [SDOs].” (Before they are issued.) “Instead, the Minister of the Environment will have the power to issue an SDO at his or her own discretion.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not being personally critical of this particular Minister. This particular Minister had, prior to this Bill, a very good track record, in my personal opinion, on the environment. And there are things that he has said in this House about the environment with which I very much agree. And his efforts on energy and his goal to bring a reduction of single-use plastics are matters for which I would stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him. And I just, respectfully, feel like he has got this thing wrong and I would ask him to rethink.

And again, it is not just the Opposition, it is BEST, it is the National Trust. And again, with your leave, Mr. Speaker, let me read quickly from the press release from the Bermuda Audubon Society.

⁴ *Bernews* 15 July 2021

The Speaker: Go ahead, Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

⁵“We believe that not enough thought has been applied to the details and consequences of the proposed amendments and we urge that they be withdrawn and reconsidered. . . . Of particular concern is the fact that Special Development Orders [SDOs], which currently undergo parliamentary scrutiny, will no longer be required to go before the House for approval under the proposed legislation. Decisions made by the negative resolution procedure remove essential debate in the House and the effective checks and balances offered by our respected parliamentarians. This flies in the face of good governance within a transparent and accountable government.”

Mr. Speaker, the Audubon Society’s press release then goes on to say this:

“These decisions should be made in public view and with full consideration by the affirmative resolution procedure in Parliament.

“The Minister” (which is the Minister presenting the Bill) “has suggested that mandatory public consultation heightens the scrutiny of an SDO beyond parliamentary examination, yet the consultation process provides only an opinion and has little, if any, weight on decisions of national importance.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with those sentiments, in particular, two of them. One is this does fly in the face of good governance within a transparent and accountable government. Good governance demands that you do not run from scrutiny, that you engage in debate, that you hear the criticisms. And you know the saying *the Opposition has their say and the Government gets their way*? You have got the votes, so what are you afraid of?

The second point that I respectfully agree with from the Bermuda Audubon Society press release is that these are decisions of national importance. And on decisions of national importance, it is the elected Members of Parliament who are democratically accountable to the people to consider them, to review them, to scrutinise them, to rip them apart, to reprove them, dare I say, and then to vote on them in the proper fashion.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to read from the press release of the Audubon Society.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, and I reiterate for a third time, that if this Bill were to be amended . . . we may see an amendment that we would support. I would, personally vote for it if the affirmative resolution procedure was being proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker, in the rounds you either support democracy or you do not. You support the importance of Parliament as a restraint and as a review body, as the brakes on the train, or you do not. If this is about leadership, well, leaders do not run from scrutiny.

Again, I respectfully request that the Honourable Minister think again because it would be very nice to see a Bill that had bipartisan support from this House. And on the other elements of the Bill, which I mentioned in the beginning, I very much support them and commend the Minister for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, good afternoon. How are you?

The Speaker: I am good, sir.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Can you hear and see me fine, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I hear you. You are missing this though, so I do not know if I am seeing you fine, but a little red would have been nice in there, how is that?

Go ahead, my friend, you have got the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I often . . . they tell me you have to listen twice as much as you speak. And I always find it interesting when I listen to the Opposition as to what they put so much passion into. There were two Honourable Members from [constituencies] 22 and 23 speaking with a lot of passion. And I recall a few years ago we were debating a Bill, I forget exactly which Bill it was, and the Honourable Member from constituency 20 was speaking and she spoke with a lot of passion as well. She spoke about the need for more development, the need for the public to have more buy-in for development and I took note of that.

So, when I . . . I will not be long, Mr. Speaker. What I see in this SDO [is] that it allows for more public consultation than previously. I wonder, why isn’t the OBA so passionate about that? Why are they so passionate that it should come to Parliament? Why are they so passionate about scrutiny?

Mr. Speaker, we, as a country, we are in some challenges. We need more development—controlled development. Not just over development, but controlled development. But along with that, we also need more public buy-in to the things that are going on in this country.

So, when we have this Bill that has public consultation, what exactly is the problem? Is the Opposition thinking that the public know less than the people in Parliament? I do not think so. So, I asked myself, *Self, why could they possibly have so much*

⁵ *Bernews* 16 July 2021

passion? Are there things that the OBA wants to object to? Hmm. Are there things, developments, that they themselves wish may not want to happen under this watch of this Government? I ask myself because at the root of that passion that we saw displayed for the last hour or so, there has got to be another reason why the OBA does not want us to bring a Bill that allows for more public consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I will not get into the talking about the NGOs and so on and so forth. But what I will say is that the Planning Department, headed by Ms. Victoria Pereira, [and] the Home Affairs Department, headed by the Minister and PS Ms. Azhar—notice I named two women, two women who are full of integrity—and these women would never, ever compromise their professional or personal ethics for some of the things that are being inferred by others. I just want to thank them and I want to thank the Minister for bringing this forward that allows for more public consultation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Minister.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate this afternoon on the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021. I have appreciated the opportunity to listen to colleagues on both sides of the floor as they have made presentations, and I certainly respect the opinions that they have passed on.

I think my colleagues have presented our side of the debate quite well here this afternoon and I want to chime in because I think it is important that we all have an opportunity and take that opportunity to speak on an important amendment that we face.

I do not think there is any need for me to focus in too much on the benefits of the Bill because I think colleagues have done a good job at that, Mr. Speaker. But there are two critical elements that I do want to focus in on.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into that, I think it is important to state that there is a very delicate balance that all politicians try to hold when we discuss the environment. It is a protection of the environment and also it is allowing development that puts the country in a position of betterment going forward and allows people who own that property to use those development rights or that ability to take their property and

turn it into something that they wish to when the time is right for them. That delicate balance is very hard to keep. And that delicate balance, Mr. Speaker, is looked at under many different microscopes by many different people. And that is why I was quite interested when I heard the comments from the Government that sometimes it is very important that they have the speed to get things done because in a time of a national emergency we might need to do that.

But Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues have pushed back in saying that we have always been available to come back to the House and we will always be available to come back to the House if the need may arise.

But when it comes to the environment, Mr. Speaker, which we see under siege all throughout the world and politicians all throughout the world talking about climate change, we realise now that it is better, in my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, to err on the side of caution. Because once we lose something in the environment, we can never get it back. And I think just about every week there are stories coming up from around the world on the impact that climate change is having on the environment.

Look at what has happened in Germany, I believe earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, when dozens of people unfortunately lost their lives because of rains that went on for three, four, or five days and floods swept through vast swaths of towns and just took people away, took buildings away. And people have said that this is due, in large part, to climate change.

So, while climate change was something that was hardly talked about by individuals or politicians years ago, now it is something that is always reflected on and considered when policy is put in place, Mr. Speaker. Especially since we live in a very small community and a very small Island of only 21 square miles, we need to make sure that we do our best to not only protect the environment, but to allow development when it is appropriate. And we see climate change, we talk about climate change ourselves, Mr. Speaker, quite often here because we have had the propensity to have more hurricanes than we would like. But because of sound policy in the past on our building codes, Mr. Speaker, we have managed to weather those storms much better than many other communities have. And so, we should not step away from that sound policy to allow us to weather the storms to put us in a better position as we go forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, where it comes to this Bill, the contentious issue of SDOs, I share my colleagues' concerns. And I share the concerns of many in the community and the environmental groups, Mr. Speaker. And one of the things that I find interesting is that the environmental groups are equal opportunity critics. By that I mean that it does not matter who the party in power is. If they have got something to say and it is critical of the Government of the day, they will say it. I think every political party has faced off with these en-

vironmental groups. And quite often they have solid points that they are making and sometimes governments just do not believe in those points. But in this case, Mr. Speaker, I think we should take on board those concerns because that is part of the consultation that this Government has said that they laud.

So Mr. Speaker, the Minister has said that this amendment will streamline the process and will help expedite matters. And there is no doubt that this will be the case. And that is laudable, Mr. Speaker. And certainly, when it comes to dealing with planning or government departments, all politicians will support streamlining as long as it is done in the appropriate place and time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also think that those hard-working civil servants in the Planning Department would also support a streamlined process because they are the ones quite often hindered by a process that does not allow efficiency in moving items forward to any conclusion, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily just an approval, but to a denial as well. So, that aspect of this debate, I think, is a given on both sides, Mr. Speaker.

But Mr. Speaker, the issue that I have had, and I am like my colleague the Opposition Leader who served in the House for a number of years, I have a great issue with the negative resolution process because I believe that it does reduce oversight of an item because, quite simply, as soon as the Minister responsible signs that instrument, it becomes law. And so, while, yes, it will be tabled in the House, and any Member of the House can pick it up and it can be debated, you are debating something after the fact—after it already has become law. And the conversation, quite often, in my view, Mr. Speaker, is just moot. It is having a conversation which really does not mean anything because no government, no Minister, would sign a negative resolution process into law if they did not believe that they had the full support of their colleagues and they did not want it done. So, why have a debate about something that really does not mean anything, Mr. Speaker? That is one point.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do realise that in the parliamentary system the negative resolution process does play a part. It can be part of amendments that need to be made going forward, and it can be part of something that does have broad community support. Or it could even have broad parliamentary support in consultation between the Government of the day and the Opposition of the day, Mr. Speaker.

But we are now here with SDOs. We are taking it to another level. We are raising the bar. We are changing the responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Because, in my view . . . and I remember, Mr. Speaker, when I first came to Parliament in 1997 and you were already an Honourable Member of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I remember hearing some of those who I looked up to and respected on both sides of the House talking about the need for parliamentary scrutiny, parliamen-

tary oversight and debate in Parliament. And so, by having the negative resolution procedure, we are taking away from parliamentary scrutiny, Mr. Speaker.

And parliamentary scrutiny is important because in the world we live in, Mr. Speaker, in a small community where MPs represent between 1,000 and 1,300 constituents (give or take a small percentage point either way), we all should be in touch with our constituents. And I know, Mr. Speaker, I can speak for myself and many Members on both sides of the floor, who are constantly in communication with their constituents. So, when a key piece of legislation is tabled, in two weeks' time they have reached out to me or their MPs to talk about that legislation, to get an understanding of that legislation or, Mr. Speaker, to give us their understanding of what the legislation means. And that is why that parliamentary scrutiny and oversight is so important, because not only are elected Members of Parliament there to serve and make the decisions—it is not the Cabinet Office on Front Street, is not the parliamentary caucus of the governing party, Mr. Speaker, it is not the civil servants—it is Parliament that normally sits in Session House that is responsible for the scrutiny, Mr. Speaker. And the negative resolution process takes that scrutiny and diminishes it to a great extent, Mr. Speaker. So, currently we have SDOs that are subject to parliamentary oversight. In my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, this is a retrograde step.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister did mention, and colleagues on his side who have spoken have mentioned that it will raise public consultation and public engagement.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is correct. But what does that actually entail? Is it just sending emails? Is it having public meetings? Is it just allowing people a forum to contribute to, Mr. Speaker? And at the end of that process, Mr. Speaker, what does the Minister actually have to do to take on board that public consultation or the engagement? In my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, a Minister can just say they did it. And we have seen examples in the past where governments have lauded public consultation, but really the general public has not been comfortable with the consultation because it went against the grain of what they thought the outcome was of that consultation.

One of those things, Mr. Speaker, is the Sugar Tax. That was a prime example that is still on people's minds. And another one, Mr. Speaker, is education. A third one, Mr. Speaker—and this one cuts across both party lines—is when the motorised vehicles were allowed to be used up in the Somerset Park area, up in your neck of the woods, Mr. Speaker. Remember the public consultation on that? I think there were only two people who supported it and over 400 were against it, Mr. Speaker.

So, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, in my humble view, public consultation and public engagement simply means that you had something. There is

no responsibility for a Minister to *act* on the results or to *act* on the sentiment of that public consultation, Mr. Speaker. That is the way I see it. And I look for the Government to say how they can . . . how they plan on changing that, Mr. Speaker. But that is the reality of the situation.

So, here we are. There are some benefits to this Bill, but we are taking something . . . a vehicle that has been so contentious through the years, for all political parties, is Special Development Orders, Mr. Speaker. And we now are allowing it to shy away from the scrutiny that it requires in the people's place, Mr. Speaker—the House of Assembly. And that is why I cannot support this amendment here this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Anyone else?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, my contributions this afternoon will be brief. And my contributions will be that out of the three things that are inside of this particular Bill—the three main items which are inside of this particular Bill—I think that they are important to certainly be supported. And what I think is vital to recognise, without question, is the fact that this Government has made promises to make Bermuda more efficient and it is delivering on the promises that it has laid out to make Bermuda more efficient.

The first thing I want to deal with is certainly emergency development orders, Mr. Speaker. We know and recognise that after hurricanes and after storms and other types of natural disasters, that they are certainly emergency situations. And in this case and in this instance, Mr. Speaker, we are now remedying a situation we find ourselves [in] time and time again after a hurricane, where we [have a] need for slate and we cannot get it. To allow these types of emergency development orders to be permitted in a case with a national emergency. So, it is certainly something where we recognised a problem and moved to fix a problem.

On the matter of conservation, this is something that was in our 2017 election manifesto which is now coming to fruition in this Development and Planning Act. It is something, as was previously mentioned, which was championed by the late Minister, the Honourable Walton Brown, and it is something that we, as a Government, are proud to push forward.

On the final matter, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of Special Development Orders, let me say this: The fact is that what we must do is that we have to recog-

nise that it is imperative upon governments to make sure that they can be effective and efficient in the discharge of their duties. The Minister has laid out very clearly the protections that are in place, which are far different than the situation that was in place before, meeting, certainly, the objectives which were laid out by the Ombudsman. And in this case and instance, Mr. Speaker, the Government is advancing not necessarily based upon political agendas, which we may see coming from the other side, but based upon what is in the best interests of this country and its development as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

So, I would like to congratulate the Minister, the Deputy Premier, for his work on these particular initiatives. And I would also like to congratulate the Minister for his work in planning, streamlining so many various processes, for time and time again you have heard about making planning more efficient, making sure that the process of planning is handled quicker. We have made lots of different changes in policy. We are making changes to rules that will make it more efficient, Mr. Speaker, and will only serve for the betterment of this country as we advance.

This Government has laid out its economic recovery plan and for us to successfully execute our economic recovery plan, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that we are efficient and nimble. This Bill achieves those aims and objectives and I am proud that the Government is bringing it today and I look forward to its passage in this Honourable House today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

None?

Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the debate has concluded with the contributions, I will happily do a summation of the discussion. And, Mr. Speaker, I do this with great pleasure. I do it with great pleasure, hearing the comments and compliments that the Honourable Premier has given to not only myself, but my team for the work that they are doing and that we have been doing since 2017.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the work that the Planning Department has been doing to better its processes and efficiencies is serving Bermuda as we speak. Right now, construction is booming. It has been . . . it is providing some of whatever lift is coming to the challenging economic times that we have, it is

actually contributing to keeping and getting people, keeping people working.

Since we came out of the state of emergency last year, construction has been moving forward. And the efficiencies and the work of the Planning team, having to literally chew gum and dance and juggle at the same time, is serving the country now. And this has been a commitment of the Government, as the Premier has outlined, and I am honoured to have been a part of the process to bring this about because it is helping the country right now, not just into the future, but right at this very moment. Construction is moving.

I took great pleasure from the comments of the Honourable Minister Diallo Rabain, as well, for his support. He is one of the technical knowledgeable people in our team in areas of development and I am happy that he gave support to this Bill in the way that he has. The Honourable Chris Famous made the point, Mr. Speaker, widening public consultation, widening public involvement, in a very significant process. And his bewilderment that the Opposition, who likes to talk about some of these issues in a way, has issues with a Bill that actually will bring more public involvement in the process, a very significant process. So, I thank the Honourable MP Famous for his contributions.

But, also, Mr. Speaker, I did value the contributions of the Opposition today. They were valuable too because they should always have their role. And it is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, on a number of significant Bills, I have reached out to the Opposition and offered them to have consultation from my technical team in some of my other departments, because they are part of the process, too, so that they can bring value to the debate. So, I appreciate that they took up the offer to be advised by the technical officers because . . . what is unfortunate . . . and I am not suggesting that the Opposition did this, but some of the, I would call, “commentary” out there is almost implying that the members of the Planning Team might be susceptible to certain influences around and might not act in the best interests of development of this country or in the protection of land or in responding to things that the country may desire. That somehow, they might be susceptible to some questionable processes or, you know, the influence that sometimes developers bring to the table when it comes to, you know, trying to get things done, or maybe even be unduly influenced by some politicians.

Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I find those implications . . . they have not been made in this House, but they have been made in other places, but I find them reprehensible because this team in Planning is unimpeachable. That is why we have seen the good work from them all these years, certainly, [while] I have been the Minister. They are unimpeachable. And just as with other major initiatives we have brought to this House, whether it be the Bermuda Plan, whether

it be the Riddell's Bay development, the Planning team has been impeccable in their work around these major initiatives that stand to . . . have brought great [influential results] to our landscape.

So, I resent, Mr. Speaker, if that word is appropriate in Parliament, the implications from others—not in this House, I make it clear—about the potential undue influences that might come which could bring about certain risk to our environment, because the Planning team is unimpeachable and I value their role and how they advise me with all these matters, as weighty as they can be.

But Mr. Speaker, I want to go forth and respond to some of the other comments that I have heard in the House. There were some interesting statements made by the speaker for the Opposition and others. There was a suggestion that the Bill had a singular premise. Well, we know that is not true. There was not a singular premise around this Bill, other than to improve the development and planning process. That is the only singular premise for which we brought this Bill. And, as the Premier has outlined, a number of election and Throne Speech promises—that is the major premise of the Bill.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: But Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I agree—

The Speaker: I will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, that is what I said, the single premise is the greater efficiencies.

The Speaker: Okay.
Continue, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that is incorrect. It is not just about greater efficiencies, but that is what the Honourable Member said. He talked about a single premise. That is not the single premise of the Bill.

The Bill brings about processes that will bring greater efficiency. It also brings about greater protection, and it also brings about the ability to more quickly respond to situations that we as a country have already experienced and will experience in the future, and it will allow a much more efficient response to those. So, the Bill has a number of premises. The only singular premise it has is to improve the overall process of development and protection, in particular, for our country.

I also heard implications of rubber stamping as somehow this will allow a rubber stamping of the process or some of the processes that it addresses. Well, there is no rubber stamping. Explain to me, Mr. Speaker, how ensuring that the wider public of Bermuda will have an opportunity to comment, to critique, to criticise and express their view on a potential development, prior to it even coming to a state of approval, how is that rubber stamping? We are widening the participation, Mr. Speaker, in the process of development, just as the Bermuda Development Plan is also standing to do. And even, I would argue, the North East Hamilton Plan, which was announced publicly by myself, is also providing a wide public opportunity to shape development.

And I will be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, this is the one Government—the PLP Government—that has consistently contributed to that. Because there are processes now and even with the amendment and, obviously, Mr. Speaker, yours truly was the Minister that brought the amendment in 2011, and the Opposition and others have taken great pains to remind the House of that and certainly remind myself and others who have commented, on what I said, what I did, and presumably what I meant in 2011. But whenever it was done, Mr. Speaker, it was always to try and bring some level of improvement to the process or to bring about an end result that benefitted the country.

Even in 2011, if I just slightly digress, Mr. Speaker, the 2011 Amendment facilitated an end result which ensured the protection of . . . well, ensured that a property that was in financial stress found a way out of financial stress. It preserved hundreds of Bermudian jobs. And here is one of the most important parts, it ensured the wider protection of lands that had not been protected—private land—that were then put into the government bank, some 40 acres, Mr. Speaker.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, that the Progressive Labour Party Government has a consistent record [of is] with protection in the area of land in Bermuda. And I do not need to outline the record because the record speaks for itself. I could go back and list it, but that is not needed for this debate. There is a consistent—a consistent—record of protections, certainly, greater than the One Bermuda Alliance. And Riddell's Bay is one of those consistent pieces of record of protection—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —balancing that with development.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That is his opinion. I just want to make sure that the general public understands that that is just the Minister's opinion on whose record is what is concerning the environment.

The Speaker: Noted.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member does not want me to list the record because it would be too painful for the OBA to hear. But I will move on, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Please do.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, he is happy to list what record he believes. But I will be listening.

The Speaker: No, he is going to move on, so he can continue to go forward. We don't have to go backwards.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not digress into a diatribe with any other Members. I am summing up my presentation on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, there were implications about the withdrawal of parliamentary scrutiny. I think this has been addressed already with a number of points of order in that negative resolutions come to Parliament, they can be taken up and addressed in any way any Member wishes. So, there is no withdrawal of the parliamentary involvement. The nature of involvement is changing, but it is not withdrawing, but that has been addressed already.

But, Mr. Speaker, in going on, I was very pleased with the comments of the Honourable Member Minister Diallo Rabain when he said we can enhance the conservation protections to private lands. And this Bill is bringing such a higher level of protection.

There has been a consistent record, Mr. Speaker, going back many years. And you are a former Environment Minister yourself, looking for ways to provide additional protection, balancing that with development, adding land to the protected land bank of Bermuda. Whether it be in government or private, the PLP has consistently supported those efforts monetarily as well as legislatively. And this piece of legislation continues, is consistent with that record, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of private areas of land that are nature reserves, that through the work of a number of individuals and groups and persons who have had a particular interest, that exist in Bermuda. And I will just name a few of them: Paget Marsh Reserve, Idwal Hughes Nature Reserve, Hungry Bay Nature Reserve, Tom Moore's Nature Reserve, Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve,

Vesey Nature Reserve—and those are just a few. I have not named them all; but those are a few. And those are all privately owned. They now have an opportunity to have the highest natural level of protection afforded public land. So, they can be easily, with the consent of the owners, be put into a higher threshold of protection and can only be brought out through an affirmative resolution of the House. That is an extremely high level of protection. That is what is afforded public land. This will now be an opportunity for private [land]. And as I said in my brief, there are already landholders parking up, looking at this for their own holdings.

So, that in itself, Mr. Speaker, even before this Bill has passed the Legislature, there are already people who are acting in the affirmative of supporting the Bill. So, is that not . . . I mean that is ironic that there are people already acting and expressing their intention to take advantage of this Bill even before, and particularly the protection provisions, before it is even passed because they have confidence that this will provide . . . this is bringing something positive, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, irrespective of some of the sceptics out there who express scepticism about this Bill's intentions.

Now, I heard certain Honourable Members talk about irresponsible. And what is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker. Irresponsible behaviour around this and the intentions may be irresponsible.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I just have a few questions to ask. Was it irresponsible for the previous administration to approve a development Act, in principle, for St. Regis without consulting the public or following the technical advice of the officers in the department? Was that irresponsible, Mr. Speaker?

Yet, I hear a lot of argument from them about not following the legislative process. So, they themselves . . . and not only that, it was the same case with Morgan's Point, a development act which avoided the SDO process, but also was not subject to any public consultation or following necessarily the advice of technical officers, using a different legislative process to avoid the scrutiny that an SDO would provide, Mr. Speaker. And those are the two signature developments of the OBA administration that they continue to hang their hat on with pride.

Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I forget, there is another one! It is called the airport—another one that was pushed forward irrespective of the public view at the time.

All projects that the former administration, the OBA, hang its hat on were done in defiance or with disregard for whatever public consultation or scrutiny or public review that they now are ascribing that they have an issue with this . . . or the changes that we are making. They did not use the SDO when it came to those particular initiatives. So, it is very interesting to hear the arguments being put when the record defies the arguments.

And so I hope that the public has seen and is aware and understands that, Mr. Speaker. You know, we do struggle as legislators to be consistent sometimes and it is a struggle, it is a battle, but it is important. I think the public hopes that we can be as consistent with our behaviour and our arguments as possible, but I have not seen that today from the other side. When it comes to their record, the argument and the action do not quite follow on projects—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —that they hang their hat on—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of order.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —that they unapologetically—

The Speaker: Minister, we have a point of order we will take.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The Honourable Member is misleading the House at best. Those projects that he has mentioned certainly had broad consultation. And what I find interesting is that in regard to the St. Regis and the airport, Government officials were there smiling, enjoying the ceremony and cutting the ribbon, Mr. Speaker. Now, if that is hypocrisy, it is at its best.

The Speaker: All right, [we] appreciate your contribution.

Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: The only hypocrisy is the fact that the “in principle” approval of the Act was done without . . . was done with great protestation from the St. George's community and not consistent with the advice given by the Planning officials. That is where the hypocrisy is, Mr. Speaker.

But I am trying to sum up, I am trying to move on to make points that will support this legislation. And unfortunately we have seen this similar behaviour from some of the environmental groups as well, not quite making comments, not consistent with their own behaviour around certain developments. But I . . . and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, some of the implications that we are hearing about “backdoor” and “questionable” and “too much power in one place” are coming from that sector. And I think that is unfortunate because there are so many people, whether it be within the environmental aspect of government, whether it

be in the planning aspect of government and who deal with issues around land and government, they are committed to keeping this country healthy, balanced, and with a safe and natural environment for everyone, and managing development in a responsible way, providing environmental protections that follow a high standard.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this particular piece of legislation, we have looked at international standards to follow. The prescription that we are shaping around SDOs is following international best practice. We ourselves remember the comments of the Ombudsman back in 2012. I certainly remember, as I was in Government at the time. And I certainly took stock of them. And what we are doing is consistent with addressing the issues even raised by the Ombudsman.

But as I outlined, attached with the UK's own framework and with international convention, what we are doing and the prescriptive procedures and processes that we will outline after this legislation is hopefully passed by the Legislature, will follow those same international guidelines, will be consistent with the international guidelines. Because we understand the sensitivities right now in where we are. This is one of the very differences from 2011. We are now in a different world, Mr. Speaker, where the issues of environmental protection are as high as perhaps even human welfare and human health and education of our children and care of our seniors.

Environmental protection is as high a priority. And especially for a community like ours, which is small, where the biodiversity is delicate, where impacts in a small development compared to a larger country, can have bigger impacts amongst everyone.

We as a Government take that seriously. And that is why we are balancing the highest of protections with providing efficiencies and flexibility, but also public involvement, in the wider process of development. And more so because the development process of Bermuda in general is going to be more participatory with the public now than it has been in the past. And that, we believe, is the ultimate protection, that the public will have sight of what is happening around developments at the very technical level, and will have the ability to have their say in deciding where that development goes, in their communities as well as with larger developments that are believed will be in the public interest.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I do move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are in the Chair, sir.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:49 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole House for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021](#).

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I seek your guidance. Would it be preferable for me to move all six clauses or go 1 through 3 and 4 through 6?

The Chairman: You may, if there are no objections, you may.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: All right.

Mr. Chairman, there is also a motion that I am also going to . . . and this may be where I will pause at clause 4. I believe that motion has been forwarded to your Chambers?

The Chairman: Yes. Okay.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: An amendment to clause 5.

The Chairman: Well, let us do clauses 1 through 3 first and then we can do clause 4.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is why I seek your guidance because it gives me the right direction. Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Yes. No problem.
Continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: All right, thank you.

The Bill seeks, Mr. Chairman, to amend the Development and Planning Act 1974 ("the principal Act") to give the Minister the power during a national emergency to implement procedures to allow the Director of Planning to expedite the planning application and permission process, to provide for public consultation of an environmental impact assessment for a proposed development prior to the making of a special development order, to provide for development orders to be made by the negative resolution procedure rather than the affirmative resolution procedure, to provide for the publication of procedures for emergency

development orders and development orders, to provide for the designation of privately owned land as a protected conservation area on written agreement with the owner of the land and to include a list of the protected conservation areas and for related matters.

Mr. Chairman, clause 1 provides for the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the principal Act to provide the meaning of “protected conservation area” as an area of land that is privately owned and designated as a protected conservation area under the new section 25A.

Clause 3, Mr. Chairman, inserts section 14A into the principal Act to provide for the making of an emergency development order during times of national emergency. The Minister, after consultation and consideration of such representations made by the Director of Planning, may provide for the publication of emergency procedures to be followed in the granting of planning permission for one year from the date an emergency development order comes into operation. An emergency development order will be subject to the negative resolution procedure.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be no further speakers.

Minister, do you want to move clauses 1 through 3?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I so move.

Okay, Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: Are there any objections to clauses 1 through 3 being approved?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: There is an objection, Mr. Chairman, there is an objection to [new section 14A](5) under clause 3.

The Chairman: You fellows are slow.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: We are not approving.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Wait a minute.

Mr. Chairman, I thought we had moved the clauses. You had called for objections and—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: He asked us do we approve all of them and I am saying we do not approve all of them.

The Chairman: No. I asked if you approve clauses 1 through 3.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Right. And I am in [clause] 3, [new section 14A](5).

The Chairman: Yes, okay, but nobody said anything.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [INAUDIBLE] Mr. Chairman, we are registering our disapproval of clause 3, which is [new section] 14A(5). We are just registering our disapproval. That is all.

The Chairman: Yes, but the procedure, Mr. Opposition Leader, there were no speakers to clauses 1 through 3.

When we move to have them approved, all right, they are approved. You are supposed . . . you did not speak against them. If you—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I know, but you are asking for the House’s approval, so I am just saying I am not going to approve it.

The Chairman: Okay, all right.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Just that [clause] 3, [new section 14A](5).

The Chairman: Okay, all right.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: [INAUDIBLE]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You may proceed.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Continue. Clauses 1 through 3 have been approved over the objection of [new section 14A](5) [by] the Opposition.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I now will continue to read the clause-by-clause description.

Clause 4 amends section 15 of the principal Act to provide that, before making a development order, the Minister shall cause the conduct of public consultation of an environmental impact assessment of a proposed development with the Director of Planning and the Development Applications Board determining the manner of public consultation with a consultation period of not less than 21 days. It also changes the procedure for making a development order from the affirmative resolution procedure to the negative resolution procedure.

Clause 5, Mr. Chairman, inserts section 15A into the principal Act—

The Chairman: Minister, you are going a bit quick for me.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay, I am sorry. I will stop there.

The Chairman: Let us deal with the amendment first. Are there any speakers to the amendment?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would. On [clause] 4, [subsection] (b).

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Again, I would like to register the Opposition's objection to [clause] 4(b) "by deleting 'affirmative' and substituting 'negative.'"

I am just registering our objection to that amendment.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Understood.

The Chairman: Okay.

Minister, do you want to move the amendment?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I wish to move clause 4 as written, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes, the . . . it has been moved that the amendment 4 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

Can I hear . . . can you signify by voice?

Mr. Scott Pearman: What is the amendment, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: You do not have the amendment, Honourable Member?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure anyone on our side has the amendment.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Well, okay, wait a minute.

Mr. Chairman, if you can advise me, the amendment that we submitted is in clause 5, not in clause 4.

The Chairman: Honourable Member—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I was just moving . . . I was just describing clause 4, but our amendment that we submitted for consideration and we submitted to the House yesterday is in clause 5.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: We do not see the amendment, sorry.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: It was submitted to the Clerk of the House and for the Speaker yesterday.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, we have an amendment to clause 6.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Come on, you guys. What is . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Opposition Leader, do you have the amendment?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I do not have it, Mr. Chairman.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay.

We found . . . I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, my mistake and I apologise for speaking in a misleading way. It was unintentional. It is actually an amendment to clause 6. I do apologise for my misdirection there—

The Chairman: That is what I had down.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —and I apologise for misleading the House unintentionally. It is actually an amendment to clause 6. I am sorry.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Accepted.

The Chairman: There you go. Okay, let us do clauses 4 and 5 then.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay.

I will now speak to the description of clause 5, I am sorry.

Clause 5 inserts section 15A into the principal Act to provide that the Director of Planning shall prepare and the Minister shall publish procedures for emergency development orders and development orders and for such procedures to be subject to the negative resolution procedure.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers to clauses 4 and 5?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I would like to register the Opposition's disapproval of the negative resolution in the procedures and development orders.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?
Minister, do you want to move clauses 4 and 5?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.
Mr. Chairman, I wish to move clauses 4 and 5 as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 4 and 5 be approved as printed.
Any objections to that?
The Opposition has voiced their objections to clause 5, I think it is, and it is approved by the Government.

[Motion carried: Clauses 4 and 5 passed.]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: May I continue, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes, do you want to do your amendment on [clause] 6?

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 6

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, at this juncture I would like to make the following motion that the Development and Planning Amendment Bill 2021 be amended as follows:
“In clause 6, in section 25A(2)(c) by deleting ‘affirmative’ and substituting ‘negative.’”

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Why did you have to change that, Walter?

[Laughter]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I do not [INAUDIBLE] change that [INAUDIBLE].

[Laughter]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [INAUDIBLE]

The Chairman: Are there any speakers to the amendment?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Opposition does not support the amendment. I think it is correct as written, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Okay. So you do not support the amendment. Okay.
Are there any further speakers to the amendment?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: We register the objection.

The Chairman: Okay. Minister, do you want to move that amendment?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I do move the amendment as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 6 be approved as amended.
Any objections? The Opposition has registered their objection to that.
Any other objections? There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 6 passed.]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: So now I will go down to clauses 7 and 8, or do I—

The Chairman: Continue with clauses 7 and 8.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, we have not spoken to clause 6 yet.

The Chairman: Oh. I’m sorry.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I’m sorry. Yes. I will read the description for clause 6, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Clause 6 inserts Part IVA, sections 25A and 25B, into the principal Act to provide for the designation of protected conservation areas on privately owned land. On written agreement with the landowner, the Minister may publish an order in the *Gazette* to designate an area as a protected conservation area with that order being subject to the negative resolution procedure. A list of the protected conservation areas will be provided in the new Fifth Schedule.

The Minister may also make an order, on written agreement with the landowner, to add, change or remove an area within a protected conservation area listed in the [new] Fifth Schedule. An order to add or change an area will be subject to the negative resolution procedure and an order to remove an area will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. A map of each area listed in the Fifth Schedule as protected conservation areas shall be prepared by the Minister and made accessible for public view at a named place during reasonable hours.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Any speakers to clause 6?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, clause 6 inserts new [section] 25A and on page 4 of the Bill you dealt with the amendment at [section] 25A(2). My question relates to the subclause below that, [section] 25A(3). And as you just read in the explanation, where there is a removal of property or land, this is going to merit the affirmative resolution procedure. But where there is merely a change in the land, in the area of the land at [section] 25A(3)(b), this does not. And I would be grateful, Honourable Minister, if you can explain why the removal merits one sort of parliamentary debate but the change merits another.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you for the question. Well, I think—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Hello?

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, may I speak or shall I hold?

The Chairman: Yes, yes. Continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: During the debate, we made it clear that the removal of any property from being protected will require the full parliamentary scrutiny. But the addition of that land to the protected, that new protected class, will only need the negative resolution subject to the agreement with the landholder. So the modification might be that maybe some contours or some aspects of the land wishes to be potentially modified or that will perhaps . . . but [if] it does not potentially impact the integrity of the protection, that can be done by negative resolution. But anything that would substantially change the protection over all the land will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

So a modification can be done very efficiently. It will clearly be done with the agreement of the landowner, whereas a significant removal of any portion of that land from protection will definitely require parliamentary scrutiny. So it is ensuring that the overall protection of the land is ensured, whereas a minor modification or change, which would certainly be done with the support of the actual landholder, can be done very efficiently.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Question, just a question. I am referring to [section 25A](4)(a). So if the donor would like to change it from “arable” to “open spaces” that would be done through negative resolution?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay. I know you are referring to a “donor,” what do you mean by “donor”? Because—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [INAUDIBLE]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —the land is owned by a person. They are not donating to anybody.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Fine. Sorry.
So you have the privately held property . . .

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The owner asks to change the classification from “arable” to “open spaces.” Does that apply here?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No.

Changes in zoning is a totally different area, Honourable Member. I appreciate your question, but the changing of zoning is a material change in the whole character of the land. And that would have a much heavier requirement and certainly [needs] to have a high level of scrutiny.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I accept that. So you said that there were changes—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: The process of zoning, just to add, as you know, is very thick. It is a part of the Bermuda plan process. So changes of zoning does not change, irrespective of the protections.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. So you said that this applies to various transactions. Can you give me the type of transaction this is referring to?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I did not say “various transactions.” But perhaps there was a minor addition of additional land that the owner wanted, or there is some aspect of the land that needs to be modified. And a minor modification that does not change the overall protection that has been given, that is where the negative resolution would be with the agreement of the landholder, not something done contrary to the wishes of the landholder.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: So zoning change, as everyone knows, is a much more complex matter and is not the subject of these provisions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. That is good enough for me.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, I defer to the Opposition Leader there, but I still have a question if I may?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, go ahead.

The Chairman: Go ahead, Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, the terms “adding,” “changing” and “removing” appear in [new section 25A] (3)(a), (3)(b), and (3)(c). Now, those are not, insofar as I can tell, defined terms in the primary Act. I have just looked in the primary Act. I may be wrong. It is a long Act. But I could not find them. Now, adding and removing, I can see how that is pretty sensible. We add; we remove. But I think you might agree with me that *changing* is more of a nebulous concept. And when you were explaining the answer to my previous question, the answer to the Honourable Opposition Leader, you seemed to suggest that changing would mean a minor modification. Where and how have you concluded that a change is merely a minor modification?

[Open microphone; crosstalk]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay. Honourable Member, I appreciate your question because we need to have clarity. For instance, maybe a shift in the boundary. A change may be a shift of the boundary.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Not changing the zoning or a change in some protection that would impact development or imply a possible opportunity for development. Once those lands are in protection, development is prohibited. No exceptions. So, no change will impact the gravity or the strength of the protection because once those lands are in that protected class, you cannot develop on the land.

Mr. Scott Pearman: But, Minister, given what you are trying to achieve here, and I commend what you are trying to achieve here, why wouldn't they all be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I think we have addressed that already, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, I don't think so, respectfully.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Well, I do, Mr. Chairman. I think we have adequately addressed it.

The Chairman: But, Minister, there is no problem in giving an answer to that because we want clarity. There is no problem with asking the question—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Oh, I—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay. I have no problem with the question. But all of those changes that are referred to in that clause will be done with the agreement of the landholder. So, just as the putting in of these substantive holding with the agreement of the landholder, if the landholder comes to us with, *Well, there is a boundary change which would have to be assessed will further complement the protection of the land*, that is the sort of change that we would support being changed, because it supports the additional protection and integrity of the protection that has been given.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Let me ask a secondary question. So, if a private land owner extends [INAUDIBLE] where do the [INAUDIBLE] to?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I'm sorry. I did not hear the question properly.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: If the landholder extends the boundary of protection, will there be a [INAUDIBLE] to the [INAUDIBLE]?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Okay. I am still having difficulty hearing because there is background noise, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member has asked that if there is a change in the boundary, meaning that the lot becomes larger, is there a stamp duty attached to that?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: A stamp duty? No. No, no. Not for this. No.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I just wanted clarity, that's all. That is why I am asking.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No problem. Happy to answer the question as best I can. No problem.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer the questions, Mr. Chairman, as best I can.

The Chairman: Any further comments?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Oh! And also, just an added point, Mr. Chairman, it has nothing to do with conveyance.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Land use. Not conveyance.

[Motion carried: Clauses 7 through 9 passed.]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Chairman: Minister, you want to move the Schedules and then the preamble?

The Chairman: No further comments?

Minister, complete clauses 7 and 8 then.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move the Schedule and the preamble as printed.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your obliging me and I am happy to have explained answers to those questions for the Opposition.

The Chairman: You have to do the Schedule first.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, clause 7 inserts the Fifth Schedule to the principal Act which will contain a list of protected conservation areas.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I move that the preamble be approved.

Clause 8 provides a consequential amendment to the Protected Species Act 2003 to make clear the distinction between an area designated as a protected conservation area under the principal Act and an area designated as a protected area for critical terrestrial or marine habitat for the protection of a specified protected species under the Protected Species Act 2003.

The Deputy Clerk: Mr. Chairman, you do not have to move the Schedule because the Schedule is a part of clause 7.

The Chairman: And clause 9, yes.

The Chairman: Oh, okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Somner.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: And clause 9 provides that the Bill will come into operation on a day appointed by the Minister in the *Gazette*.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: Any further speakers to clauses 7, 8 and 9?

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Minister, do you want to move clause 6, as amended, and clauses 7 and 8?

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

The Bill will be reported to the House as amended.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 7 and 8 as printed.

The Chairman: And clause 9.

[Motion carried: The Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed as amended.]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Clauses 7, 8 and 9 as printed. I am sorry.

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

The Chairman: And clause 6 as amended.

House resumed at 4:14 pm

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, thank you for your guidance, Mr. Chairman.

And clause 6 as amended.

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

The Chairman: Any objections to the motion?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT 2021

[Motion carried: Clause 6 passed as amended.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as amended?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as amended.

Thank you, Members.

We now move on to the next item on the Order Paper today, which is the second reading of the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

Any objections?

There are none. Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Government wishes this Honourable House to now give consideration to the Bill entitled Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, on the 12th of March 2020, the World Health Organization categorised the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic less than three months after first reporting an unusual cluster of severe pneumonia cases in China. It only hinted at a possible new disease. Cases and deaths have rapidly grown to over 120,000 and 4,600, respectively. And little was known aside from evidence that large gatherings played a key role in the rapid spread of the virus.

Mr. Speaker, less than one week later on the 18th of March 2020, the Bermuda Government announced that the first diagnosed case of COVID-19 had been confirmed in Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, without any pharmaceutical agents known to be safe and effective against COVID-19, most governments around the world were left with no choice but to impose non-pharmaceutical interventions to reduce transmission of the virus and mitigate risks to the public health. These included bans on public gatherings, mandatory stay-at-home policies, closures of schools and non-essential businesses and in some cases, like Bermuda, restrictions or complete closures of borders. While

these proved effective in reducing transmission, their impact on many economies has been severe.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, the impact of the pandemic has been felt differently by individuals depending on their circumstances, most notably those without the ability to earn income working from home. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the impact of this pandemic has been profound on all of us, but I ask the Members of this Honourable House to consider the impact on individuals who were deprived of the ability to earn income to provide for their families.

For many in Bermuda, in addition to dealing with actual or potential health challenges, they faced a struggle to even take care of their basic needs due to no or significantly reduced income. It was clear that the Government needed to provide financial assistance to those individuals most impacted by restrictions on movement and thus their ability to provide for their families.

The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has been experienced and felt by all, but in a manner that neither has been equitable nor balanced. The unemployment benefit [UEB] programme represents this Government's best effort to ensure that impact of the necessary public health imperatives to keep our collective society safe was more balanced, especially for those who were forced to sacrifice their ability to earn income for the greater good of all.

Mr. Speaker, the Government therefore in very short order drafted regulations to provide an emergency temporary unemployment benefit, a first of any kind in Bermuda. Further as the fast-paced pandemic evolved and outbreaks occurred in Bermuda, the Government was committed to extend or reintroduce support as necessary which resulted in several amendments to the regulations to authorise payments.

Mr. Speaker, as I have already stated before this Honourable House, the demand for the unemployment benefit was overwhelming and substantial as there were 10,000 applying for initial support and more than 6,500 reapplying for continued benefits under various amended regulations. Because of the critical nature of ensuring that funding was provided to these vulnerable persons on a timely basis, initially at the onset of the first shelter-in-place order, there were instances in which there was insufficient time for the unemployment benefit applications to be completed within the full review and approval process prior to making payments in accordance with the unemployment benefit regulations.

Mr. Speaker, there is therefore a need to validate any such payments made under any of the unemployment benefit regulations to an eligible person without prior approval as required by the relevant unemployment benefit regulations. During the initial UEB, the Department of Workforce Development formally approved 3,300 applications, having vetted them in accordance with the regulations. During the

second phase of UEB, all 5,833 applications that have received benefits were fully vetted and approved in advance of payment.

Mr. Speaker, due to the fast-moving developments, including rapid changes of infection rates on the Island, it is necessary to also validate all instances in which extensions were made to the payment of the unemployment benefit. Some benefits were made prior to the extension of their relative regulations due to timing differences between when amendments can be gazetted and when individuals were expecting and relying on their next benefit payment to help provide for their families.

From the 6th of January through the 23rd of March, 357 payments were made for a total of \$516,065.90. Payments of \$73,000 were made to individuals who were under mandatory medical quarantine without pay from their employers. And 267 payments of \$443,000 were made to individuals whose income was directly impacted by the restrictions on bars and on indoor dining.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, there were other instances in which some recipients of unemployment benefits received more money than their legislated entitlement. In most cases, this was due to individuals or their employers not advising on a timely basis that they had returned to work as required under the regulations. Some recipients have already returned their funds, while others whether or not they were aware, have not and therefore still owe the government.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to explain further how the overwhelming majority of these situations occurred by walking through an actual example. One individual was eligible for benefits beginning on the 24th of March 2020, the effective date of the regulations, and ending of the 25th of May when they returned to work. This is a period of nine weeks, meaning, he or she was eligible for a total benefit of \$4,500. However, Mr. Speaker, while he went back to work on the 25th of May, he did not inform the Government, contrary to the requirements in the regulations, until late in June. Therefore, on the 10th of June, he was paid an additional biweekly payment of \$1,000, which represents money he received while working and earning normal income while not informing the Government.

This scenario represents the vast majority of funds outstanding. It is the Government's intention to inform all individuals with outstanding balances of this nature and pursue the recovery of amounts directly from respective recipients. To this end the Ministry of Finance has formally commenced this recovery effort and sent emails to 2,075 individuals, which represents an aggregate of \$2.6 million of the \$3 million that is outstanding. While initial attempts will be pursued directly with the individuals, where appropriate and as needed, the Government will engage with employers in our efforts to return funds to the public purse. It should be noted that several individuals, and in a few

instances companies on behalf of their employees, proactively returned funds they knew were more than the benefit entitlement in advance of the Government's formal recovery efforts. The expectation is that all individuals and all companies that are informed will follow these examples of responsible citizenship and swiftly return funds.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to reemphasise that the COVID-19 pandemic was not something most countries were sufficiently prepared for. When the Bermuda Government was faced with having to ensure that its citizens were able to support themselves and their families due to the financial impact of the public health measures, it was operating in a new territory and without the luxury of time.

Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned previously, it was a time when saving lives had to take precedence over rigid adherence to rules of best practice for the greater good. Notwithstanding that predicament, sufficient processes were followed and amended to ensure that the actions contemplated by this Bill are to validate eligible payments and to assist in the recovery of any amounts outstanding to the Government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Minister's introduction. The pandemic was catastrophic to this country, both from a health point of view and an economic point of view. Our economy virtually closed down. There was high unemployment. There was closure of a number of businesses. We have had businesses that had been around for centuries that have closed as a result of the pandemic. And that has left an economic scar on this country that will last for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I am very, very sympathetic to those people who lost jobs and came upon tough times economically. There are still a number of people in our community trying to recover from the challenges that we face economically and health-wise. At this juncture I take the view that if we have a healthy population, we will have a healthy economy. So what we are seeing now, Mr. Speaker, our COVID-19 numbers are down. There are very few people in the hospital. And so our healthy population is on its way and hopefully with proper discipline within the community, we will see our COVID-19 numbers sustained at the current levels, which is very positive. Our economy, in

turn, will get the injection that it needs to move forward.

The only comment that I would like to make on this issue is that I understand the dilemma. I understand that we were in a crisis situation, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that when we are talking about government money we are talking about the people's money. The Minister indicated that they tried to put procedures and protocols in place so that there is proper accountability and governance for the people's money. But events overtook him and he was not in a position to get those procedures in place and completed in time.

I have seen where this Government has a habit of making decisions and not putting the proper protective protocols in place before the procedures are rolled out. And so all I am saying is that I know the horses have left the stable. Let this be a lesson to the Minister that when we have these support programmes, be they unemployment benefits, or providing economic support to our small businesses, that we really have the infrastructure in place before the programmes are rolled out because we have to be responsible when it comes to the people's money. And we are accountable to them and we owe it to them to demonstrate that we are proper stewards of their assets, the money that they pay to this government.

And so my message there is: Going forward, let's ensure that we have the operational procedures and the protocols in place before we publicly announce any type of support programme, because, as I said, you are talking about the people's money, not the government's money, not the PLP's Cabinet money. You are talking about the people's money.

The only other comment that I would like to make . . . and the Minister was very, very clear in regard to how he arrived in this situation. And he gave the example of how an employee who was on the benefits went back to work on May 24 and did not report his return to work until June 10, and as a consequence received an additional unemployment benefit payment.

My question to the Minister is: How is he going to manage those individuals who fall in this category but are not able to repay the funds, who cannot afford to pay the funds? Are we going to write off this money? What protocols does he have in place to support these individuals who cannot repay the \$2.2 million which the Government intends to pursue in regard to this \$3.5 million overpayment which was made by Government?

When we last spoke the Minister indicated that 300 people have repaid approximately \$500,000. Where are we today? How much have they recovered since our last sitting?

Like I said, I am sympathetic to his cause and I understand the process. I understand how he found himself in that situation, but what is going to happen to those individuals who not in a position to repay the

overpayment because they do not have the resources and they are still in rough times even though they may be working part time, even though they may be working at a reduced salary? So can the Minister provide comfort to those people on how he intends to help those people get out the dilemma in which they find themselves?

And with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, that is all I have. I look forward to hearing the Minister's comments.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'm just getting the video on. Hopefully it is on. Here we are.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Thanks to the Honourable Minister for his clear and concise presentation of this Bill. We have actually had a Ministerial Statement on this Bill at the last sitting. There was a considerable question and answer, and we are grateful to the Honourable Minister for his clear and straight responses to those questions as posed.

I had just two questions that I wish to raise to the Honourable Minister and hopefully he will do the indulgences of addressing them. One is in fact the question that I note that the Opposition Leader has already raised, and that was of when we were here previously in this Honourable House. The Honourable Minister of Finance confirmed that \$500 million *[sic]* (give or take) had been recovered and I was—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [It was] \$500,000.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry, \$500,000. I slipped.

I am just curious how much more has been recovered since that Statement to the House two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, my second and final question to the Honourable Minister is this: As I understand it, the reason for these overpayments was that someone was out of work and he or she was gaining support financially and they went back to work and failed to notify the Government that they had gone back to work. And so it was that failure that caused continuing overpayments of some \$3.5 million to have been paid.

And the Minister in his Statement on this Bill refers to a set-off plan. And the idea, as I understand it, is that if any of those people are to claim money, the unemployment benefit, in the future, the overpayment will be set off against any future claim. And my question for the Minister is this: I do not quite understand how that is going to work because it seems to

me that anyone who owes an overpayment to the Government owes the overpayment to the Government because they went back to work and are at work, and therefore the vast majority of them, unless they lose their jobs, there will be no set-off to be made because they will not be claiming in the future.

So, if the Honourable Minister could just confirm whether I have understood that correctly or if I misunderstood that, because otherwise the set-off seems somewhat artificial and meaningless.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

There appears to be none.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to respond to some of the questions put forth by the Opposition Leader and others. I would just say, I want to be clear that this is not a defensive comment but just one of reality.

I do not think there is a person yet who we have found on the face of the earth who was able to predict to some degree of certainty that we were going to have a pandemic. And so I make no apologies for not knowing one was coming and not being prepared to know how to deal with one. As I said before, we had two days to stand up a programme to provide support to Bermudians who were going to be negatively impacted by the shelter-in-place orders. I would say that objectively I think we did a very good job and I think the overwhelming majority of people of Bermuda, especially those who were recipients of funds at that time, would agree.

I certainly accept the point that it is the people's money. Of course it is. And that is exactly why we are choosing to pursue recovering those funds because, as I said before, I am not clairvoyant. I am not sure when the next crisis may present itself. And inasmuch as there is money that is owed to the government, we should do our best to recover it. So we are working on that.

With respect to the question around how much additional funds have been collected, as I mentioned in the Ministerial Statement two weeks ago, half million dollars was returned voluntarily either from recipients and/or their employers. We have officially kicked off the formal effort now to recover the other monies (earlier this week) and so no additional amounts have been captured yet, although there have been a flurry of telephone calls to individuals who have been proactively reaching out to the Government to try to identify how much is owed so that they can get started on [getting] that process going.

We will endeavour to provide some degree of flexibility, but people will have the opportunity to es-

tablish payment plans if they are unable to pay the full amounts by the dates that have been established in emails that most folks [INAUDIBLE] lead up to the course of the last few days. But it is our intention here not to besmirch people's reputations, their characters, or create problems for them with credit. All we are trying to do is recover in an orderly fashion the monies that they were not entitled to, and we will have some degree of accommodation and will work with people.

With respect to the question regarding the right to set off, it had been my hope to kind of have this legislation passed a whole lot sooner wherein we could have set off amounts owed against benefits that were paid over the course of the most recent wave of unemployment benefits. But inasmuch as we did not get it here on time, and there may be a need for set-off in the future, it is a tool that we have in our quiver that we did not have before that inasmuch as there is a next time, we certainly can avail ourselves of it going forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House in Committee at 4:38 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Public Treasury \(Administration and Payments\) Amendment and Validation Act 2021](#).

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, the Bill seeks to amend the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 [the "Act"] with respect to set-off; and to validate certain matters related to unemployment benefits effective during the COVID-19 pandemic that has presented an unusual disruption to the Bermuda economy.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 3.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 22A(1) of the Act to insert paragraph (b) to ensure that the provisions with respect to the right to set-off extend to sums paid for the purpose of assisting unemployed persons (“unemployment benefit”).

Clause 3 provides for validation of certain payments of unemployment benefits provided such payments could lawfully have been made in accordance with the relevant Unemployment Benefit Regulations prescribed under section 33 of the Act. This clause also preserves the right to recover funds, preserves liability to prosecution and related matters.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.
Are there any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Okay.
Minister, do you want to move those clauses for approval?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that preamble be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: 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 appear to be none.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 4:41 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

No objections.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, thank you for your contributions today. That brings us to the end of the items that are on the Order [Paper] today.

We will now ask the Ministers to do their third readings.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Development and Planning Amendment Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are no objections.
Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, 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 its title only and is now passed.
Thank you, Minister.
Minister of Finance.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, 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 its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members and Ministers.
Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, July 23.

The Speaker: At 10:00 am?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, 10:00 am would be a good time. And I understand that the Deputy Speaker would like to say something.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Would any Member—

Hon. E. David Burt: Maybe you can throw down the gavel again, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, it is in my hand.
Would any Member wish to make a comment on the motion to adjourn this evening?
Any Members?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. Can you see me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I hear you; I do not see you yet.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Hold on. I am having problems with my video, Mr. Speaker.
Hold on. Can you see me?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: If he has problems, can I go, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Well, let the Deputy Speaker go right now. The Deputy Speaker seems to be ready. We can sort you out afterwards then. Okay?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you, MP Famous.

The Speaker: We can just get your camera adjusted, Deputy. We hear you loud and clear.

BANK ACCOUNTS FOR SENIORS

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Okay. I am trying to get that going.

Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of weeks I have had complaints about some residents of Bermuda, particularly seniors, who have put those whom they can trust on their bank accounts for reasons that if they become incapacitated then funds will be available for that person to get and disperse for whatever has got to be paid. Now, they go to the bank and they do this procedure. But the problem, what has been happening, Mr. Speaker, is that if the person who they put on the account has, let's say a mortgage with the bank, and they are in arrears, then the bank goes to that account and takes the money. And I am quite aware what the bank has in their mortgage agreements with those who have a mortgage. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that they go into this account, with no knowledge by the senior who has put them on the account.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the bank and all these institutions have a duty to advise members, whether they be seniors or whoever, that if they put someone on their account, they should advise them of the consequences. They should not just be able to go and take these funds and the senior (in particular) finds out this has happened when they get a statement—to their surprise. I would ask the banks to fix that immediately, because that is not the way busi-

ness should be handled. They must advise anyone, seniors included, that if they were to put someone on their bank account for whatever reason, there can be some consequences.

USE OF POLICEMEN'S BODY CAMERAS

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, also, I was pleased to see that the Commissioner of Police won the case against a police officer for turning off (let me say) their camera. They have a different name for that. He won that case. So I am happy with Mr. Corbishley, and I say that sincerely. The lesson, I guess, is that if you have got a camera, you leave it on. It appears it is illegal for the policeman to turn off their cameras.

Now, let me say, on the other hand, with all due respect to the Commissioner (the Commissioner was not here when this happened), when they went to Dr. Brown's office and raided his office, they (the police) disabled their cameras. This was illegal. And those policemen should have been dismissed for misconduct.

So you see we have these two sets of rules—one for others, one for some (whatever you want to call it), but there are two sets of rules. There is nothing right with that. And again, the present Police Commissioner was not here for that. But it cannot be right on one side of the street and wrong on the other side of the street. They must treat people all the same, with respect, and they cannot, should not, be allowed to come in anybody's place . . . they broke into Dr. Brown's office and disabled their cameras.

EMANCIPATION DAY/MARY PRINCE DAY

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Now, Mr. Speaker, July 29 of this year will be the celebration of Emancipation Day, and July 30 will be Mary Prince Day. Mr. Speaker, I do not celebrate Emancipation Day. In fact, when I worked in the hotel industry, I worked both of the Cup Match days. And one of the reasons I worked those Cup Match days was because I felt that those days, public holidays, were the only days that I was paid what I was worth. In other words, thanks to my trade union, the Bermuda Industrial Union, if I worked eight hours, I got paid for 20 hours. So I always worked on Cup Match when I worked in the ranks, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely welcome the chief occupant of the largest house on Langton Hill to her first Emancipation Day in Bermuda, and Mary Prince Day the next day. I sincerely hope that she will come out past the beautiful Hamilton Parish on her way to St. George's and see St. George's rescue the Cup from those other boys from up west. What a wonderful occasion that will be and she should witness that.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I think of "emancipation," we know what emancipation means. I mean, the slavery was abolished in Bermuda on August 23, 1833, and it became a fact on August 1, 1844. But as the word "emancipation" means freedom, we were not free. Black folks in particular were not free, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just prior to August 1, 1844, the establishment were going around Bermuda and preaching to former slaves (former slaves to be) about being subservient to the master and telling them that if they act up (and these are my words) those same people who gave them freedom will take it back from them. So, Mr. Speaker, we never had freedom. In fact, it was 125 years onwards in 1959, after days of protest, that Blacks could go into theatres and sit where they chose.

Mr. Speaker, when our Bermudians went away in World Wars I and II, they came back home and they couldn't vote. Just imagine, Mr. Speaker, fighting for world peace and you go back home and you could not vote. Now, there were some who could vote if they had land, but that was subject to the scrutiny of the powers that be, because your land had to be worth a certain amount. And the only time that they had some freedom in voting was in 1968. They were free to vote. Of course, I think you had to be 25 or 21 at that time.

And then, Mr. Speaker, all of these acts that I am explaining already, and which I will explain some more, were condoned and sanctioned by the chief occupant of the largest house on Langton Hill who reported at that time to, I think it was White Hall, now they call it the FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] because you know the Governor at that time sat in the Legislature.

Then in 1920 they enacted what they called the Development Act and took land from people in Tucker's Town and they set the rate at what these folks would get. And they have done this to people who, in the definition of the word "emancipation," were supposed to be free. But there were not. And then they would not pay them the wages they requested. In fact, in 1944, when the Americans came here to construct the bases, they paid everybody the same amount. But when the powers that be in the country found out, the Labour Board enacted policy that *You don't pay Black Bermudians the same as whites*. And so Black's wages were frozen while the workers from overseas and white workers got three increases. Not only that, they got cost of living and everything else. And eventually that is what started the BWA [Bermuda Workers Association] and then it eventually became the BIU [Bermuda Industrial Union].

And then under this emancipation where you were supposed to be free, they jailed Reverend Monk. Why did they jail Reverend Monk? Because, via his newspaper, he was reporting about the atrocities on the worksite. And they trumped up this charge of lia-

ble. And no matter who Reverend Monk would have brought in, because he did bring in a lawyer (and he died the night before the trial), they were going to jail him. And they did, Mr. Speaker!

Reverend Monk was pastor of one of the AME churches, he served a few of the AME churches in Bermuda. And he had Reverend Tobitt, another AME minister who, because of his involvement, because he became the President of the Bermuda Union of Teachers (Bermuda's first union), and he got involved with the international trade union movement and Marcus Garvey, they forced him off Island. This is all under emancipation where we were supposed to be free. All endorsed, condoned and approved by the chief occupant of Langton Hill.

And then monies even in the 1930s, monies to go build our schools, and they gave money to five schools. One Black school, Berkeley. Even though Blacks were two-thirds of the school population, Berkeley was awarded only 18 per cent and they gave Saltus, Whitney, Warwick Academy, Bermuda High School, the rest.

And then, Mr. Speaker, on November 9, 1998, after the PLP won the election, prior to them winning the election if you read any of the auditor's reports, you would have seen new language that they started to use when the Progressive Labour Party took power. When the Progressive Labour Party took party in 1998, after that the auditor's reports started using words such as "maladministration," "fraud," "corrupt,"—every adjective you can find. But we never found those words for the previous UBP Government, Mr. Speaker.

In his 1998 report, Mr. Speaker, he reported that \$16.3 million was not collected because law firms devalued assets so that they could pay less duty (or tax) to the Government. Those actions did not warrant one adjective in his report to describe that action, Mr. Speaker. And many other things that happened . . . never, never . . . if you look in those books, you would have never seen such words. But when it came to the Progressive Labour Party it was a different story.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you [allow me], I would like to just read something that one of my younger colleagues released this week. If you do not mind, Mr. Speaker, it is only a few words.

The Speaker: Go ahead, Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He was talking about somebody, "This clearly is a sign that there continues to be a divide in our community where the historically disadvantaged are seen as corrupt and the historically privileged are seen as deserving." That is what he wrote. A young Member seeing that already. That is how they treat us, all under emancipation.

Then, Mr. Speaker, if you look at our prison population. Mr. Speaker, I still cannot figure this out. Why is our prison population 98 per cent Black? Why, Mr. Speaker? You know, I saw a report on television, I think it was last week where they said that Blacks and whites use the same amount of marijuana, proportionately. But Blacks were six times more likely to be charged, investigated and jailed before whites.

In Bermuda I guess it is nine times out of ten Blacks will be investigated and jailed before whites. And consequently our prisons are full with Black men, in particular, and a few Black women.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the chief occupant of Langton Hill, the largest house on Langton Hill, to take the chains off Dr. Brown, off of Zane De Silva, and off of Zane's daughter Zara, take those chains off them. Let's get true emancipation. Investigate why Blacks are investigated and jailed and whites are not. Investigate the income disparity that still exists in Bermuda today. This has gone on for hundreds of years, Mr. Speaker. So I am asking those folks . . . not those folks, I'm sorry, our first female, our first Black chief occupant of Langton Hill, that large house on Langton Hill, to let's have true emancipation. Let's have true freedom in this country for Blacks.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I would like to just congratulate Rashida Godwin, Maxine Esdaille, Shirley Pearman, Charles Jeffers and Dr. Michael Bradshaw on doing tours and giving the history of emancipation to those who are interested. This has been offered by the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport under the honourable leadership of the Honourable [Senator] Ernest Peets. So we want to thank them.

Because I will not be able to talk next week in this capacity, I want to thank St. George's in advance for winning the Cup and thank Somerset for participating.

[Laughter]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: I just hope they look nice and smart as they always do. And do not take the licking too serious. You know, it's time. The carpentry work has been completed at St. George's Cricket Club and there is now room for the trophy. So that cabinet will be decorated with the trophy come July 30. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for supporting St. George's in your capacity of Speaker of the House. Thank you.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. Deputy, I believe you had a good line and length until you got there. I think you missed the wicket there at the end.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, sir.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I will defer to my colleague, Mr. Famous. He was in line. I thought he left the meeting. I will defer.

The Speaker: I could not recognise him by what he had on his face. I was not sure who he was that time.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Now that I see him I think I will have to rescind my offer.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP Famous, your colleague gave way to you before he noticed what you were wearing. So you have 20 minutes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you, colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my opening bat—

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Member of Parliament is improperly dressed for Parliament and needs to remove his mask.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker, I concur that he is improperly dressed.

The Speaker: Yes. I think you need to adjust your . . . there you go. Now we can allow you to speak. How is that?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, do you see my light blue shirt and my dark blue jacket, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: We are still trying to get the colour adjusted here.

PLP GOVERNMENT FOCUSED AND UNITEDLY TACKLING THE ISSUES

Mr. Christopher Famous: I want to thank my opening bat, the prolific batter from Harris' Bay, transplanted to Bailey's Bay when appropriate, the Bishop, because he said in his closing argument everything I want to say so there is no need for me to repeat that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long time since I have been able to call your name. Mr. Speaker, are you familiar with English literature?

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: There is a gentleman called Charles Dickens. According to history, he wrote quite a few books. But we never know. There were a lot of ghostwriters around at that time. But according to history there is a saying from Charles Dickens, credited to Charles Dickens that said, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness . . ."

Mr. Speaker, four years ago this week, two days from today, the people of Bermuda in record numbers (I may add) went to the polls and duly elected the PLP Government, 24-12. Let me repeat: 24-12. One year ago, give or take, they went back to the polls and they re-elected the PLP Government with five extra seats. Mr. Speaker, I am no statistics guy. I will leave that to persons such as the Honourable Minister Jason Hayward and the Honourable Finance Minister. According to those numbers it seems as if the people of Bermuda—all people of Bermuda—have increased their faith in us. Why is that, Mr. Speaker?

In 2017, we were faced with a number of challenges—challenges with our schools, grass not getting cut, no Wi-Fi in school, teachers not being able to do this, that and the other. The Honourable Diallo Rabain was given a mandate to get on the job. There have been bumps along the road. Some things need to be adjusted, but we have tackled head-on the need to reform our education system. Under the stewardship initially of the Honourable Premier David Burt as Finance Minister, he tackled head-on the need to trim our deficit. In June 2018, we went from 24 seats to 25 seats. Subsequent to that, the Honourable Curtis Dickinson became the Finance Minister. And he tackled head-on and continued trimming our deficit, showing that this PLP Government is about economic reform without cutting the civil service.

Mr. Speaker, under my cousin, the Honourable Wayne Caines, he and others (notably my other cousin, Reverend Leroy Bean) tackled head-on the issue of the challenges with our young men. He was out there night and day. And for one year, Mr. Speaker, we actually had zero gun murders. That was a proud moment, not just for Minister Caines, but for all of us in Bermuda. So much so that the then Premier

of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Honourable Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson, came to Bermuda to find out what we were doing because they needed to tackle these problems in Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, we were faced with an Order in Council by our colonial masters that we must—we must—surrender our public registers of beneficial ownership and we must do all of these other things. And as one of the leading Governments in the Overseas Territories we stood up and said, *No, we are not. We are not allowing foreigners to vote in our elections. We are not allowing you to change our morals and we are not surrendering our public beneficial ownership registers just through an Order in Council, not until it becomes a global standard.*

You see, Mr. Speaker, the people went back to the polls in 2020 because they saw that we are a party that does not shirk from what we have to do. Yes, we make mistakes along the way, or mistakes are made along the way, but on the road to righteousness you must come across sinners now and then (according to “Bishop” Burgess).

You see, Mr. Speaker (as you know, you were once in our caucus so you know), on Wednesday, do not set a time that you are coming home because caucus will get hot because we will debate things internally before it reaches Friday. And that is tradition; I can assure you that this tradition has continued. Why? Because we are not a party of homogeneous thinkers. We do not all think alike. We do not all see things alike. We do not all agree on everything. But what we do agree on is that we are here to represent all people of Bermuda. Those who voted for us, those who didn't vote us, and those who are upset with us and say that they are not going to vote for us again. We have to have a broad church of opinion, Mr. Speaker. But either way, at the end of the day, we have to get things done.

The Honourable Finance Minister brought a Bill to the table earlier. So the fact of the matter is that some people got overpaid. But in some countries, the people never got paid. They got \$1,000 [as] a one-time payment. Their governments told them, *That's it. You've got to figure out on your own how you are going to survive.* You see, Mr. Speaker, 18 months ago we were on track with increased jobs, increased business openings, increased tourism and then along came COVID-19. A word most of us never even heard of before. I remember the last day we sat in your Honourable House where you are now, Mr. Speaker, and in the Upper Room, the Common Room, as the Honourable Opposition Leader states, we watched the WHO [World Health Organization] director from Ethiopia, declare that this was a worldwide pandemic.

I remember looking at the Honourable Finance Minister and saying, *What does this mean for us, Minister?* I saw a look on his face and he said,

This means we have to get tougher and we have to protect our people.

I asked, *What does this mean?* to the Health Minister. The Honourable Kim Wilson said, *We have to save lives, Chris.*

So what did we do? We shifted gears and focused on preserving the health of our people. We focused on preserving our economy the best that we could. We focused on providing funds for our people who were out of work due to no fault of their own. We focused on how a small country like ours could survive a global pandemic. Everyone was in lockdown. Everyone was [saying], *What is going on? WhatsApp was going off left, right and centre. How can I get food? How can I get this?* So, not just as a Government, but as a party we worked together with our western branches under the organiser of Tulani Bulford, who helped organise food for people who did not have food. Under the Warwick branches Honourable Tyrrell, Honourable Lawrence Scott and others worked together to make sure the people of Warwick were fed.

In town, the Deputy Premier and the Honourable Michael Weeks worked together to make sure the town people were fed. In Devonshire, Honourable Minister Diallo Rabain, then Senator Vance Campbell and others worked together to make sure that Devonshire people were fed. Down in the east, Mr. Speaker, the St. George's batting team led by the Honourable Renee Ming, her batting partner the Honourable Kim Swan, and her batting partner the Honourable Lovitta Foggo made sure that the people of St. George's and St. David's Island were fed.

You see, we do not operate just as a Government, we are a party. And more than a party, we are a family. Yes, we have our squabbles now and then, Mr. Speaker, but the one thing is: We are a family and we survive. We did that for over one year. We helped to stabilise our COVID-19 numbers, we helped to reopen businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we had a hiccup in March where unfortunately we lost lives. And hopefully this is a lesson learned for all Bermudians that all it takes is (I don't want to say *careless*) but let's say a few *unwitting* people to cause an outbreak. Mr. Speaker, we have to move on. We can't forget that we are still in a pandemic. But we still have to carry out the mandate under which we were voted in in 2017, and again in 2020. So let me get a little bit more granular, Mr. Speaker. Due to the vast majority, let me say 99.9 per cent, of Bermudians and Bermuda residents following the guidelines we were able, one week ago, to move off of the CDC Level 4 list to where we are now, on the CDC Level 1 list, which means to say that is the safest list possible. So when tourists are looking for places to go, and they look up who is on CDC 1, Bermuda (alphabetically) should be on top of that list.

Again, Mr. Speaker, due to the vast majority of Bermudians following guidelines, we have moved

off of the UK's amber list to the UK's green list. So those coming from Europe can look and say, *Hey, Bermuda's on the green list*. Mr. Speaker, what is the net result? Due to the hard work of the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable David E. Burt and the Minister of Transport, Honourable Lawrence Scott, our airplanes coming in are now full. Go down to Perot Post Office any given day and you will see how full our planes are. Our taxi drivers who are making less than \$20 a day, up until a few months ago, are now busy again. Ask me how I know, Mr. Speaker. I had to wait almost an hour for a taxi the other day, and I live in Devonshire. That is how I know things are percolating again. Our hotels are filling up. Those who have Airbnb, the middle-class Bermudians, are now seeing bookings again. If I go to a restaurant, they are going to ask me, *Do you have a reservation?*

Mr. Speaker, while other countries unfortunately have to put in curfews and look at lockdown measures, we are pressing ahead. So when I see people, whether they were elected or unelected say, *Hey, we need to open up!* And you ask them, *Well, what is closed?* Nothing is closed, Mr. Speaker. Everything is open! The only thing that is closed or controlled is at our borders.

Mr. Speaker, in our neighbour to the west, America, the COVID-19 Delta variant is raging. Because, why? They have no controls at their border. They simply have a negative test, come in, and that's it! I heard MP Dunkley say that this is what we should do. How is that working out in America, Mr. Speaker? Their numbers are going up. Our numbers are going down.

Mr. Speaker, we also now have cruise ships coming into our harbours. We are doing homeporting, something that most of us have never heard of before. That is through the work of the Tourism Minister, Transport Minister . . . and let me say, the Transport Minister is ably helped by a team at his headquarters. He should name those ladies every week [when] we count our tourism numbers because they work hard under PS Jasmin Smith. They worked hard to put our homeporting programme together. There were hiccups along the way. But, Mr. Speaker, almost every day there is a cruise ship out in town or in Dockyard. There is more foot traffic in St. George's than ever before. Again, a hiccup, but it is going to be sorted out. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Viking line has said they want to sign up for more time because it is a success. There are other cruise lines that are saying that they want to come here, Mr. Speaker.

But let me move on, Mr. Speaker. You heard earlier today from the Honourable Minister Colonel David Burch about the infrastructure stimulus programme. The steps at Elbow Beach are fixed now, or are being fixed. There is a wastewater project down at the east that is underway. Just yesterday they opened up the new world-class MDR Laboratory [Molecular Diagnostic and Research] where we are now able to

take samples of Bermudians and have results in six hours. In America you have to wait 48 hours for results at times. Our MDR Laboratory, headed by our Bermudian princess, Dr. Carika Weldon, is so well-renowned that other countries are now sending samples here, Mr. Speaker. But the critics will not tell you that. They won't tell us that. Mr. Speaker, there are so many other things. We have increased our ties with our Caribbean neighbours. We have provided more training for our young people.

But let me end here, Mr. Speaker. Let me go back. *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was age of foolishness*. Mr. Speaker, the entire country has borne witness to some foolishness this week. I will not get into any specifics, but let us just say fraudsters expose themselves. It does not take a government to expose a fraudster. Mr. Speaker, rules are in place, regulations are in place, because we have to keep our country safe. No one wants to go back to finding out two people died last night, this place is shut down, you cannot go to a restaurant, you cannot go to your barber shop—no one wants to live that way! So we have to accept the reality that COVID-19 is here. We have to live with COVID-19 and live with regulations. Not because the Government is a dictatorship, but we are trying to keep our ship floating.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago when we got voted in, no one could have predicted what we are dealing with now. No one! For anyone to say that the last four years have been easy will be totally dishonest. As a people and as a Government, we have been challenged. We have been congratulated. We have been thanked. We have been booed. We have agreed; we have disagreed. But guess what, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: You have about a minute . . . about 56 seconds.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Through it all, Mr. Speaker, we have stood firm. So I say to my brothers, *PLP, all the way! United we stand, divided we fall*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, again.

The Speaker: MP Simmons. Would you like to take your 20 minutes now, sir?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I won't take that long, sir.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes. Go ahead.

PLP GOVERNMENT SEEKING TO CHANGE THE MIND-SET AND TRANSFORM BERMUDA

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I rise today out of a sense of obligation to the people who elected me. I rise today out of a sense of obligation to my personal morals, spiritual, and ideological imperatives. And I rise today out of a sense of obligation to the ideals, beliefs and philosophy of my party, the Progressive Labour Party. Ideals such as those articulated in our very first election platform: equitable taxation, an end to racial discrimination, economic parity and welfare programmes, as well as housing, educational and electoral reform.

Four years ago this Sunday, Mr. Speaker, we were blessed—we were blessed—with an opportunity to govern this beautiful land. Elected by a people who believed we had been humbled by our time in the wilderness of Opposition and were willing to give us, not only another chance, a big chance.

The ideals of our founders from so long ago still resonated. The value and the ideal of breaking down the Two Bermudas, resonated. But like our founders, like all of our political forebearers in the Progressive Labour Party before us, we who believe in the elevation of the condition of the small man are offended by and forced to contend with a certain mind-set. A mind-set that adheres and listens to the cries of non-Bermudians wanting to buy a piece of the rock but is deaf and whose hearts have been hardened against the cries of our own born and bred Bermudians struggling to find a decent, affordable place to lay their heads.

A mind-set that hears and listens to the cries of foreign investors for tax relief and benefits but is deaf and whose hearts have been hardened against easing the burden in real and transformative terms for those who cannot afford to make ends meet in their own country. A mind-set that hears the cries of those who want to grow Bermuda's population but is deaf and whose hearts have been hardened against the cries of those who are pleading for more to be done to give our own Bermudian people the hope and the means just to stay here. And who are also deaf, Mr. Speaker, and whose hearts have been hardened against those crying for a plan to bring back Bermudians forced to leave our home for a better life and better opportunity.

A mind-set that has no problem contemplating term limits on Government assistance for the poor and working poor and the introduction of budgeting classes for those on financial assistance, but has no issue with allowing financial assistance in the form of tax and other concessions for businesses to roll over into perpetuity with no demand that they learn how to become better managers and custodians of their own finances. A mind-set that hears the cries of those who say, *Lock up the criminal*, but are deaf to the cries of the worker whose employer steals from them, pocketing money that is supposed to go towards the health insurance or pension.

A mind-set that either defends, makes excuses for, or is impotent when it comes to those who price-gouge us and only grudgingly employ us, yet whose hearts have still been hardened by those who are demanding action. A mind-set that causes decisions that disproportionately and negatively impact the poor, the working class, and Black Bermudians tough, when in reality it is simply business as usual. A mind-set that says that the ends justify the means and that believes that deception, intimidation and arrogance are acceptable.

Like me, so many of my constituents have expressed their disgust, their dismay, and their desire to see this mind-set caught, conquered and defeated. Like me, they believe, and they have told me, that for too long the mind-set that I have spoken of has dominated the narrative, dominated the approach, dominated Bermuda and dominated an economy that has left too many Bermudians behind.

Our people want to see that mind-set defeated, conquered and wiped away. They want to see a change to one that recognises that the struggling Bermudian needs, deserves, and are entitled to the same respect, the same attention, and the same sense of urgency that the elite, the rich, the privileged and the non-Bermudian receive. They want to see a change of mind-set. Away from a mind-set that for too long has looked down upon the poor and the struggling Bermudian and sought to either blame them for their condition or assumed they had committed some sin for which they were being punished. They want to see a change of mind-set.

When I and my constituents see aspects of the Government's economic plan that we debated earlier this month, they and I still feel hope, but we need more. And our people deserve more than hope. Today many of our youth see Bermuda, Inc. as a broken and failed model and are speaking out about how they want better for themselves and their children. Today we see groups emerging that view Bermuda, Inc. as a failed and broken model and are starting to push ideas and suggestions that are in direct line with the original ideals of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party: equitable taxation, an end to racial discrimination, economic parity and welfare programmes, as well as housing, educational and electoral reform. Ideas emerging from this changed mind-set are growing. Ideas which were once considered radical and unthinkable are becoming rational and urgent.

We can elevate the poor out of poverty. We can stop the prison revolving door and we can take broken men and women and make them whole. We can invest in our people and give the support they need to get off the wall, to get trained, to get hired, to get promoted and, yes, even to get their own business. We can transform Bermuda into an even greater land of opportunity and bring our people home to work, live and flourish. All it will take is the defeat of and a change from a certain mind-set.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

Hon. E. David Burt: I guess . . . am I ready to close?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: MP . . . I hear . . . MP—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I think my microphone is unmuted and my video should be recording now.

The Speaker: MP Dunkley.

BERMUDA TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, good evening to you and colleagues.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the motion to adjourn tonight, Mr. Speaker, after listening very assiduously to Members who spoke before me. I speak because I am going to voice for the voiceless tonight some dissatisfaction, concern, angst, and frustration amongst many Bermudians with the recent handling of Government in some regards to COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I have been urged to speak by individuals who are quite frustrated at some of the things that have gone on recently. And I am happy to speak because I feel the frustration and I understand the frustration.

Now, before I get into the crux of what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, let me state unequivocally and forcefully that I fully support the Government in protecting the safety and security of all Bermudians and our residents. I fully support the Government in protecting our borders. However, Mr. Speaker, I believe on occasion Government has, in my opinion, lost its way or become tone-deaf to some extent. Let me give some examples of that.

A couple of weeks ago, I believe it was on June 20, the restrictions changed. And that meant that two main things took place at that time, Mr. Speaker. Well, I guess you could say three things because the country opened up to a great extent—that was positive. But there were two other things that had an impact on some of our ways of life as Bermudians and residents. One, there was a mandatory quarantine for travellers who came back and were not vaccinated. And secondly, the Travel Authorisation Form was changed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken publicly about both of those issues and I wanted to bring them up again tonight in the motion to adjourn for the simple reason that I believe there is a better way. I have been besieged by people sending me messages about the Travel Authorisation Form. And Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me, I would just read one of those communications that came to me by email on July 2.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, this is from a long-time visitor to Bermuda and his wife who have travelled from their home in California to Bermuda every year, sometimes a couple of times a year, just because they love the Island that we call home.

This gentleman said, “Good for you, Mr. Dunkley, for urging that the unwieldy Travel Authorisation [TA] either be dropped or totally revised. We ourselves were victims of it on June 20 when we were at the start of our journey from California to Bermuda. The TAs did arrive but not until hours outside of our time to leave for the airport even though we had submitted the applications two days earlier. We had to cancel the trip. During the last 24 hours before the departure we frantically tried to get resolution through emails and the useless hotline to no avail. We sincerely hope there will be a change because we are longing to return to Bermuda.” [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me also add very quickly here that I am sure that all of us support the work of everyone who is involved in any way trying to make Bermuda a better place through this pandemic, and all of those who work on the frontline. But clearly, Mr. Speaker, with the changes to the TA we had some problems that were not foreseen and those problems still exist. When somebody submits a form two days before they travel and tries frantically to call 24 hours before they travel to get it sorted out, and they can't, and they have to cancel their trip, that tells you that this is a serious problem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that the problems are deeper than that because there are many individuals who published their challenges on social media. Even Members of the House were seen on social media in a very difficult position in front of airline check-in agents at an overseas airport. Now, I understand, in my view, that there probably be at least two reasons why there are more challenges with the Travel Authorisation Form [TAF]. First and foremost, they have probably been inundated with an alarming increase in the number of people filling out a form once the Island opened up. And I think that even though Government has not given information out about the number of applications recently for the TAF, it is clear by the amount of testing that has taken place that more people are coming to the Island. So, obviously, with more applications in place, and I would suggest there were probably close to 1,000 a day at the present time with

the airport and the flights we have and people travelling, there is going to be a difficulty for that team to deal with those. Now, Mr. Speaker, if there is a difficulty for that team to reply to TAF applications and people are calling in on the hotline, then we have a serious situation that needs to be taken a look at.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told stories about people who have called the hotline and have waited for over an hour, only to be cut off. I have been told stories of people who started at number 89 waiting in line and get down to number 9 and they get cut off. It goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, if we want Bermuda to recover somewhat from the pandemic, if we want Bermuda to be able to be open for business, if we want those who have been out of work or underemployed for the last 15, 16, 17 months, if we want to bring hospitality back, which is so important to our community, we need to make sure we can get this right.

And the other thing about the TAF, Mr. Speaker, is that it has become more complicated to fill out. And that has been told to be by a number of people. And I have actually travelled in the interim and I have seen the changes from the original form. You have to pay attention to it more, Mr. Speaker. There is more detail in it, Mr. Speaker, and that is causing some concern. Even seniors, Mr. Speaker, have reached out to me in their concern about having to go away and being able to fill the form out, especially on the phone when they are coming back and the screen is not as big as they would normally have on a home computer. So, Mr. Speaker, there have been some real challenges there and I would ask that the Government address those to make that system more efficient. If you have a hotline, let's make sure that it is a hotline and not a "dead" line.

COVID-19 MANDATORY QUARANTINE DOUBLE STANDARDS

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, another issue that has really concerned Bermuda is one of double standards. Through the shelter at home many Bermudians were told to be in certain places and not to do certain things and it has bothered them because they have seen where other individuals or companies were allowed to do things that they were not allowed to do. The big thing for Bermudians, Mr. Speaker, is as you know, during the summertime we like to go out on the boat and raft-up. We do not want to just drop anchor in a quiet place and sit by ourselves. We want to have a raft-up, maybe 5, 10, 15 boats, and enjoy ourselves. Play some music and just chill, Mr. Speaker.

Well, obviously, through COVID-19 raft-ups were not allowed. And I understand, and I accept that, Mr. Speaker, because we had to do all we could to protect ourselves and to protect [Bermuda] from the spread of the virus that was on the Island. However,

Mr. Speaker, the double standards that I refer to, in my opinion, come when we see social media videos going around of a well-known company that travels all around the world to promote those jurisdictions having a raft-up. And when questioned about it, the transparency in my view, Mr. Speaker, is minimal at best. That is a double standard, Mr. Speaker. Why in any case would we expect somebody to accept that when they themselves could not do it?

Now, Mr. Speaker, another issue that has bothered Bermudians to a great extent is the issue of the mandatory quarantine. Now, Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. I support the vaccination. I have been vaccinated, and I urge all Bermudians to be vaccinated. So some people say, *Well, Michael, why do you even care about it?* Because, Mr. Speaker, while I accept that we have to protect our borders, I accept that we can also, I believe, do it in a better way. But Government has made the policy that it is mandatory quarantine for those who are not vaccinated, and they have to pay for it in places that Government has said will be the places to go for the 14 days.

But, Mr. Speaker, we saw that restriction come into place belatedly. The deadline was pushed back further and further and further. And now when it has come in place—and I will not speak to the issues that have taken place because I understand they be *sub judice*. But now when it is come in place, Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot even enforce it and they look weak.

If we want our community to open up, if we want to protect our borders as we open up, if we want people to come to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that our restrictions are not so onerous that people go to other places. We have to make sure our restrictions work for us, Mr. Speaker, and we have to make sure that our people abide by those restrictions whether they like them or not. They are the law. They should be enforced.

Right now this Government looks weak, even in spite of what the Premier says, *Don't test our resolve*. People have. If those situations are not resolved in a very quick manner, Mr. Speaker, other people will test it and we will look like a laughingstock in our community, because we have a long way to go. We have a long way to go, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member who spoke just before me from constituency 11 said that there is more foot traffic in St. George's than ever before. That is not true, Mr. Speaker. We have a long way to go. We still have a lot to do. The hospitality industry is struggling because they cannot get people to work night times and weekends, Mr. Speaker. We have a long way to go.

I am all for opening up Bermuda with proper precautions, Mr. Speaker, but I will not sit silent while Government is tone-deaf to some of the challenges we face and the aggravation and the angst that the people of Bermuda are [speaking about]. They ask us to speak up. Just today when I went to the apothecary

at lunch time a lady who I did not know said, *Mr. Dunkley, we need to hear you speak for us because some of these rules and restrictions have gone too far*. So, Mr. Speaker, I speak tonight. Not solely to be critical of the Government, but to the Government to understand that over the past 16 or 17 months, Bermudians have felt the pain, and their patience is low.

Many of us are drained. Our mental health has been drained by being shut down; locked down, do not have the normal flow you have, Mr. Speaker, dealing with challenges that you might not normally have. So Government has to understand and accept that patience is low, we need to govern with a fair hand, and get away from seemingly ([as seen] by many people) being dictatorial. We are losing our way as we move forward and we need to bring it back with policies that are firm and fair and will put the best interest of people in the forefront at all times.

I think there is a better way. There is no reason why we cannot quarantine at home, Mr. Speaker. We live in a small community. There is technology that helps us do it the right way. And, Mr. Speaker, we all care about our future. We should be our brother's keeper and stop trying to lock people up in a forced quarantine at a hotel. That is what that is. That is what people are calling it. And why should I care? I am vaccinated. It is not part of me. But I do not like to see Bermudians struggle with something. So, Mr. Speaker, I say this constructively because I know the Honourable Premier and colleagues have a very difficult job to do and the pandemic is far from over. And with the variant we have facing us all over the world and here in Bermuda, we still got work to do. But, Mr. Speaker, it has proven a couple of things. Now we know how to manage it better. Now we have some drugs to help us if we do get ill. And now we have real hope with the vaccination.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will close by saying I urge this Government to pick up the vaccination programme again because we have stagnated at about 63 per cent. We have a long way to go if we are going to get COVID-19 behind us. We must do better, Mr. Speaker. Pick up the vaccination programme. Tell us how it is going to be done and we will support you in the Opposition to help us move forward with real economic growth and putting COVID-19 behind us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: MP Cannonier.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I am just getting the video up, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: It's up.

The Speaker: Right. You have your 20 minutes.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

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

As you are aware, on June 25 in the motion to adjourn I had asked some pertinent questions about a contract that had been awarded to AESG. And I was just really trying to come to some clarity as to how from 2018 to now, 2021, we seem to just be moving forward with this particular contract. That is a long time and I would have assumed that based on the time and not having details being given to the public that it probably would have been put out to tender.

Based on those few questions that I asked I was anticipating in the last session that we would have gotten some answers. Unfortunately, we did not get any answers. And I guess in the motion to adjourn people did not move quite quick enough. So I was hoping tonight that I would have heard something coming from any one of the Ministers or MPs who were involved in the project to at least get some clarity.

I have stated in the past that unless we are transparent and unless we give information so that the public are aware they will come to conclusions, and many times they come to the wrong conclusions about matters. Since I first brought the matter up, and we fast-forward now to two sessions later, there has been a resignation by one of the trustees of the National Sports Centre. And this particular trustee has made some accusations that, quite frankly, are extremely disturbing. I have read through the articles that I believe the PLP have attempted to give answers to. And so today I did a press conference, because the PLP has answered in public, I figured that I would go ahead and ask my questions in public as well. And there were about nine questions that I did ask. My concern is this, Mr. Speaker: We now have a trustee who has resigned.

I personally now have in my hands information, and I can provide that information to you, Mr. Speaker, that is completely contrary to what I am hearing in the public from the PLP representatives. I am also disturbed that in my hands I have a contract that has been signed for the loan facility that was gotten by, supposedly, the National Sports Centre trustees—

The Speaker: Member, I would suggest, if you are not going to table it, that you at least make sure that I have eyesight of what you are referring to, on both of those items.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will give you a folder that is full of pages and I will ensure that

this gets to you from our secretary, Judy Benevides, ASAP.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

So my concern really is that we now have a contract in front of us, no one seems to know who the borrower is because on behalf of the National Sports Centre there is a signator that should be given by a trustee or the director. And so the person, who has now resigned as a trustee, is basically saying that this signature is not by the director of the Ministry, neither is it of any signator on behalf of the National Sports Centre.

Now this is very disturbing.

So my concern really is, who then approved this loan? I have documentation in front of me that will be given to you, Mr. Speaker, that clearly states that the trustees were not in agreement to the loan facility. They were not aware of the down payments that have already been made to the tune of almost \$1 million, and were not in agreement, including a document that shows that the Finance Minister was not in agreement to a \$12,000 monthly payment to the former chairman of the PLP party for the next 10 years. And that it should be renegotiated. Even the actual facility itself and the interest should be renegotiated. This is all in writing, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: There are a few things I have to say. Number one, the fact that we do not have sight of what the Honourable Member is speaking about is a challenge. And number two, I do not know if there is any bit anywhere written about payments to certain persons. So when the Honourable Member is trying to speak, I know where he is trying to go to impute all types of things, but I think that it is patently unfair that this is being put on the record in an unprotected place when the information may not be correct.

And if that information is not correct, then the Honourable Member must make sure that he withdraws that next week, after people get to see the documentation of which he is referring to because it is patently unfair, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier, that is why I asked that he make sure that the documentation arrives at this office and if the documentation when vetted is not correct, I would expect that the Member would do the right thing.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, the documentation is on its way to your office now, electronically.

The Speaker: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: I want the rest of it sent to him as well.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: What?

An Hon. Member: I want all of it sent to him.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I appreciate the Premier stepping in, but I would caution the Premier right now because I have the documentation coming from the National Sports Centre in writing with signatures. And I would caution the Premier to be very careful what he says going forward because the information is in front of me and it is not bogus information, it is clearly coming from the trustees and I will provide that [to] you.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: In addition to that, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: Just a minute. Let him finish what he saying.

Finish what you are saying.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I am clearly aware that phone calls were made after I just asked general questions. But I am not making any accusations at all. I am simply asking questions. That is what I am doing right now—

The Speaker: Okay. Okay.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: —is asking questions.

The Speaker: Okay. I allowed you to continue based on that last point. I would suggest that you not make any accusations.

If you have something in front of you that you think is factual, you can speak to what you were provided but do not make any accusations out of it because we cannot determine whether accusations are correct or not. The key thing at this stage is that we get to see the documents and that you expect that it is either accepted or not accepted in its entirety. And if there is anything in there that needs to be withdrawn, we would ask you to withdraw it at the appropriate time next week. Okay?

But be guided by the fact that we do not have the documents.

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

What I will do then, Mr. Speaker, is I will present some of this information right now and read it verbatim. And as I said, I have our secretary who will be forwarding this information to you in writing so that the Premier can be privy to it as well. And I am sure that the Premier is already aware of some of this information.

The Speaker: You cannot say if you are not sure. You cannot say if you are not sure.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I am sure, Mr. Speaker. This is a letter coming from a trustee to the Permanent Secretary of the National Sports [Centre] and the letter basically . . . the subject matter, says: "National Sports Centre letter cease and desist from finance." This is coming from the finance of the National Sports Centre. "Minister and Permanent Secretary, We want to get a letter of cease and desist to AESG for the project that was not signed off by the board and funds returned with immediate effect. In addition to this, the board would like to have both Craig Tyrrell and Jache Adams MP Jache, the Honourable Member—

The Speaker: I would suggest right now that you do not refer to names until we can get this verified.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay.

The Speaker: Okay? Just be very cautious about how you proceed in regard to that.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Well, I was giving you the factual information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We need to verify that it is factual. I cannot dispute that you do have a document. You do have a document. At this point we cannot verify how factual the information may be. So that is why I am asking you to refrain from naming any individuals.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a different tack here.

I am going to send this documentation to you. It is clear in my mind that questions need to be asked and that answers need to be forthcoming. We already have someone who has resigned. We also have trustees who are extremely concerned about what has taken place and have voiced that. I have called to them now to publicly come forward and make those statements and their concerns known.

When you see the documentation, Mr. Speaker, which I am sending across to you, it is the minutes from the National Sports Centre and the trustees outlining all of their major, major concerns. And

so when I take a look at this information, and I have it in front of me, my only recourse is to ask the questions, because I am not accusing anyone of anything. I have simply said, *Give some answers*. And what public information that has now come forth from the PLP Government, is even more concerning based on the factual information that we now have in front of us.

Quite frankly, I cannot see why the trustees would be sending bogus information out there and why I would have an envelope full of this information from the trustees, with their names fully on it, signatures upon it, and emails going back and forth between civil servants and the trustees. That is what you will receive in front of you. So I am not afraid to make sure that you have it, but questions need to be answered.

And the first question that needs to be answered, Mr. Speaker, is:

1. If the board of trustees was unaware of the loan, then who took out the loan in the name of the National Sports Centre?
2. What was the bank told about the lack of authorisation by the board of trustees?
3. Who signed the loan agreement on behalf of the National Sports Centre as the borrower? Because the trustees do not recognise the signature.
4. Given that the Bermuda Government was the guarantor of this loan, did Cabinet fully approve the transaction?
5. How can a loan have been granted to the Sports Centre when the board of trustees are saying (based on the information that I have) that they never authorised any loan?
6. What is the position of the remaining five trustees? I believe there are about six of them on there. One has now resigned. They resigned, as they said, because they were fearful of the backlash of irregularities. They, the trustees, must make their position clear at this point in time.
7. Why are allegations being made by a trustee that the loan agreement was fraudulent? The emails specifically to the PS of the Ministry says that they need to cease and desist because this loan is fraudulent. So why? Why have these allegations been made?
8. Why is this project being progressed at all when the government is in such economic dire straits?
9. Why is the Sports Centre entering into a multimillion dollar contract when the Sports Centre has no funds? As you will see stated in the minutes it has no funds to support or repay the monies being loaned.

And so I asked questions two sittings in the past; we did not get any answers. And I am asking questions again, and I am hopeful that this time around someone will answer those nine questions that

I have asked. It is important that we clear up the cloudiness around this matter. But quite frankly, I am sure that people are just trying to get something going.

But what disturbs me is this, Mr. Speaker . . . Whilst away, and I was abroad, and I will say that coming through the process of the airports was wonderful. I enjoyed a very easy process coming through the airport. But whilst I was away I received a phone call by the same gentleman who in fact is the benefactor of AESG, the former chairman of the PLP party, to suggest that, *I thought we were friends?*

Well, I only made a statement to ask the question, *Well, what's going on?* So I answered and said, *Well, what are you talking about?*

[He said,] *Well, you know, people are trying to take food out of my family's mouth and out of my mouth.*

And [he] then proceeded to threaten me to say that if anybody tries to take a project away from him and take food out of his mouth, they will become their target.

Now, I'm not going to put up with that. And I was not going to say anything at all, but until I got that phone call, I'm like, *Okay, well, you think you can threaten me, well, let's go PLP Government, and your former chairman, let's go at this particular project and let's clear the air.* Because I can assure you, I am not speaking without having facts in front of me, Mr. Speaker. That ain't my style.

So I am saying to the PLP Government, let's get these facts out there so that the Bermuda [people] can understand why they are taking out a loan for \$3.2 million. This is on the taxpayer. The original contract for this project at National Sports Centre was funded, the original bid that AESG put in was funded privately. Those terms have changed. And if those terms have changed, and because those terms have changed, and the National Sports Centre supposedly has taken out a loan, but the trustees are saying they have not, who took out the loan?

The other question to this is: So, if the financing has been taken away after three years, then the conditions of that bid have changed. It needs to go back out to tender. How is it that a quango or a sector of the Government can go out and procure a loan based on the original bid that now has changed? If the financing is not in place, you are telling me that the other folk who bid for this thing should not have the same opportunity to come forward and say, *Well, look, if you can provide me with financing, then this is what my bid is.* So the context of this particular contract has changed. And everyone involved, every single Minister involved, should understand that when those things change, you must put it back out to tender.

And then for me to read a document that basically says, and I'm reading (hopefully, as you said, it is factual) . . . I am reading a document that says the Finance Minister did not agree with the \$12,000

monthly payment to the former chairman of the PLP party. He did not agree with that payment and that it should be renegotiated. But it is already in place!

So, some answers are needed. And I understand that the Premier will probably want to get up and say whatever he wants. And to accuse me, how *He knows where I am going.* How dare the Premier get up and talk about he knows where I am going. What about all of the false information he has been putting out there? I am talking about facts that are right in front of me. I am not seeking to bring anybody down. And let me be clear about this here—

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

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Let me be clear about this here—

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

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member, of course, as usual, is misleading the House. So we will try one more time.

I can confirm to him that the \$12,000 to which he speaks is not part of the contract which was executed. But that is unsurprising, so I will let others speak to that. But let us just start because I know where he has gone, I notice where he has gone. He has gone from PLP Government, to our former chairman and all of this type of stuff. I understand where he is trying to go. But I think it is very important, Mr. Speaker, and that is the reason why those documents were sent. We have no idea where he may be coming from—drafts, final things, et cetera, and all the rest. But I can confirm, and this was just sent to me, so I will wait to [see] the documents, but I think that it is very important that when we do thing under privilege, that we make sure we are speaking with factual information.

And to be clear, Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member had a question about the specifics of a particular contract, he would have put them down in a parliamentary question rather than bringing it up under privilege in the motion to adjourn.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

I anticipated that from the Premier. And, quite frankly, it was very predictable. The reason that I am coming forth now with these questions is because when I did ask questions in the House of Assembly the PLP Government refused to come back to us—

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

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: —to answer—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order, point of order.
Member, point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the record reflects that no parliamentary questions have been submitted by that Member regarding the National Sports Centre.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Again, Mr. Speaker, here is the Premier in his spin. I asked the questions on a motion to adjourn expecting some answers. We did not get answers, but what did take place was that we had Honourable Members go to the public and give information to the public rather than answering the questions that an Honourable Member asked in the House of Assembly. It does not have to be a parliamentary question; I asked those questions during a motion to adjourn. And now the Premier is coming up with *Oh, well the \$12,000 is not in fact . . .* Well, if the Premier would have put that out there in the first place, like I said—

The Speaker: Member, you have less than a minute left.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
So, the—

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

The Speaker: Let me, let me . . . let me before . . . are you going to use up your minute?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I am going to use up my minute.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: So the Premier—

The Speaker: I want to caution you when you're finished. Go ahead.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So the Premier can continue on with his assumption that he knows where I am going, but I am simply trying to clarify the matter. That is all we are trying to do, [trying] to clarify the matter.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is imputing improper motive. And it is a very simple situation. If people want to know facts, they will lay it out and ask questions in a regular and simple fashion. And it is unconscionable that the Honourable Member would now come back the following week with information that we have not seen in an attempt to say something with information that cannot be verified under a point of privilege.

So I raise a point of order that it is imputing improper motives against—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is just [INAUDIBLE].

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is well aware that—

The Speaker: Member, let me just—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: —let civil servants—

The Speaker: Member, Member. Your time has run out.

But let me just caution you where I have been all this time in that your information that you have before you . . . you have strongly tried to stress the points in it. Again, it has been done without us having sight of it. We must . . . I just checked my email and what was sent to me was just a single page of a short paragraph, not anything to do with—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: More is coming. There is a whole lot more coming.

The Speaker: Wait. Not anything to the degree of what you were speaking of. So, I am going to insist that I get the full documentation of what you spoke of so that we can verify what was said. And again, if there is anything that needs to be withdrawn, you will be asked to withdraw it next time, or at least to provide clarity on what you were attempting to say, if what you said is not factual. Okay?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, I promise you what I said is—

The Speaker: I am going to put that on the record because of the fact that we could have it in front of us now and you have used the privilege to be able to speak to it. But that privilege comes with some responsibility. Okay?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: And that responsibility was to give you the information. I promise I will send it to you. It will take a little while because there is a lot of it. And I have already guaranteed that I will send the information that the Premier [INAUDIBLE].

The Speaker: Just get it to us as quickly as possible. Thank you.

Would any other Member wish to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Any other Member?

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to finish, but I thought that another one of my Members was going to speak.

The Speaker: It seems that no one else is moving.

Mr. Premier, I can put the gavel down now, or I can let you use the last 20 minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: You do not have to put the gavel down, Mr. Speaker. If no one else is going to speak, I will go ahead and take my beats, I have no issue, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you . . . whoops, sorry, a Member stood up right there, Mr. Speaker. There's a few—

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, if I may?

The Speaker: Mr. Campbell, I had acknowledged the Premier—

Mr. Vance Campbell: I understand, Mr. Speaker. I understand.

The Speaker: I am going to be (what's the word?) . . . I will be cordial this time. Next time try to be a little quicker, please.

PLP GOVERNMENT FOCUSED AND UNITEDLY TACKLING THE ISSUES

Mr. Vance Campbell: Much appreciated, much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to November 27, 2020, one of the great days of last year, my birthday. But that is not what makes it great. It was my opportunity to deliver my maiden speech. And I spoke about my village, because, you know, that saying *It takes a village to raise a child*. In speaking about my village, I mentioned that on October 2, and the few weeks shortly thereafter, people that I knew were congratulating me, and the two phrases that stood out were, *make us proud* and *don't let us down*. At that particular time, I asked who is this "us"? And I went on

to say that this "us" that we are supposed to be making proud and not letting down was our family, our friends, our neighbours, our constituents and our beloved Bermuda.

We have had a lot of challenges—COVID-19 for one, and the economy. We have argued in recent times about quarantine and vaccinations. But yet, our economy is in tatters. The 36 of us in this House were elected to serve our family, our friends, our neighbours, our constituents and our beloved Bermuda. I do not think I am naïve, Mr. Speaker. But we have spent today fussing about this and fussing about that in this motion to adjourn. And it is the right of individual speakers to speak on whatever they choose. In the meantime, are we serving the people of this country?

You know, *make us proud*. I wonder if that is what we are doing. Not just today, but in recent weeks. *Don't let us down* says, you have the ability, use it. Are we using our abilities?

Mr. Speaker, you look like you've played a sport or two back in your day. I like the month of July because we have the Tour de France. And for those who don't know what the Tour de France is, it is a cycle race, a pedal-cycle race in the mountains of France, and the Pyrenees, and sometimes they have some stages in other countries. There are 21 stages. [Some] stages cover mountains. Some of [the stages] are flat. There are time trials. And the individual who covers the entire distance in the shortest time gets to wear the yellow jersey as the winner.

But within this race . . . and they race in all kinds of conditions as well—rain, wind; if they are up high enough in the mountains, they see snow. It is both a team sport and an individual sport at the same time. Each individual who enters the race has their personal agenda, but they are part of a team. That team has its goals and aims for that particular race. And the team is not just the other riders on that team, it includes the support team, the cars that carry the food, water, nutrition and the spare bikes, because sometimes there are accidents.

Mr. Speaker, there are team prizes. And each member of the team is meticulously selected for their skill set. Some specialise in time trials. Some are sprinters. Some are good in the mountains. Some are all-around riders. One of the key roles of the team is to protect the team members who they anticipate will be in contention for that yellow jersey at the end of the race; in other words, the best all-around rider.

This race, Mr. Speaker, is unique from the perspective that sometimes individuals who are racing against each other, it is in their best interests to actually work together, because in working together, although they are competing against each other, is in their best individual interest. And the same goes for the team, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes it is in the best interest of the team to work with another team or teams that they are competing against, because it serves their individual team's goals.

In this race, Mr. Speaker, which finishes on Sunday, you have an individual, or a small group of individuals, who decide they are going to break away from the main group of riders, which is known as the peloton. They do this in spite of the fact that every rider knows, at least in theory, that the peloton can travel faster than any individual rider or small group of riders. As a result, Mr. Speaker, on most occasions these break-away groups are caught by the peloton. Sometimes the break-away group or rider succeeds and wins the stage. This usually happens when the peloton is disorganised. And what I mean by disorganised is that it does not work together. The various individuals compete against each other; the various teams that are in the peloton do not work together. And when not working together, they do not travel as fast so they fail to catch the break-away rider or break-away group of riders.

What is the relevance, Mr. Speaker? I learn a lot from sports. And in many ways, sports mirror life in general. Mr. Speaker, there are 36 of us here in this House. We are here because we each successfully ran as individuals, seeking election as the representative of our respective constituencies. And at this time, I would like to thank the broad cross-section of my constituency, number 9, which voted for me, because without that broad cross-section of voters I would not have been successful. But yet, we ran as individuals, but we were part of a team. We were either part of the PLP team, or the OBA team.

And much like the Tour de France, as individuals working as part of a team, we were better able to achieve our individual goals while helping our team to accomplish goals. We were able to reach out to more people with the assistance of that team, perhaps cover more ground with the assistance of that team in reaching out to the constituents we were asking to vote for us.

Mr. Speaker, like the riders in the Tour, we must overcome mountains. Our mountains are not physical, but economic in some instances. Like the riders in the Tour, we will have to ride through changing conditions, not weather conditions, or terrain related. They may be the ever-changing requirements of compliance as determined by bodies such as the OECD, the EU, or the US Government. Like the riders in the Tour de France we have our individual goals and agendas; we have our team goals. The OBA has their goals; the PLP has its goals. Individually we are looking to establish our brand. Our teams are looking to do similar. But those who succeed in the Tour are those who achieve that balance, the correct balance, between their individual goals, the team goals, and still working with those who they are competing against.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I do not think I am a naïve individual to believe that at this point in our history we do not need grandstanding around the quarantine regulations. We need the 36 individuals in this House

to work together, like a well-organised peloton that can move faster, succeed in catching that break-away group, rebuild our economy quicker, navigate all the compliance challenges, including the latest one, which is this universal income tax. We will not fail to turn this country around because we have differences of opinion about the quarantine regulations. We will not fail to turn this country around because some are against taking the vaccine. We will not fail to turn this country around because of travel TA forms. We will fail, Mr. Speaker, if we fail to work together and learn from the competitors in the Tour that we can work together but still maintain our individual goals. We can work together and still maintain our team goals.

But, unlike the Tour, Mr. Speaker, the consequences of not working together are far more serious than failing to win a cycle race. The consequence of the 36 individuals in this House not working together is a failed country—our friends, our families, our neighbours, our constituents unable to find employment, unable to feed their families, unable to put their children in school. I do not believe that is what any of us want, Mr. Speaker.

So, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to again remind us that we are here to serve. Yes, we will disagree at times in the execution of that service. But let us not forget why we are here. The main objective is to govern this country. It is to serve those constituents who voted for and elected all 36 of us. And again, I do not think it is naïve or pie in the sky to believe that we can accomplish that while still maintaining our individual goals and our team goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Campbell.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Hayward, you have your 20 minutes.

PLP GOVERNMENT PEOPLE-CENTRED

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to provide intervention in this motion to adjourn this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to carry on from where MP Campbell finished. We have a responsibility as leaders of this country to lead. It is our responsibility to provide the support to individuals and families that need that particular support. It is our responsibility to move us in a direction where we have a Bermuda that works for all. It is our responsibility to ensure that we have an economy that provides opportunities for our friends, our families, our loved ones. And that is what the majority of us aim to do despite the noise.

Mr. Speaker, with the onset of the pandemic, we had over 10,000 individuals displaced from the workforce. Bermuda has never seen that much disruption in our economy, let alone our labour force. Today we discussed in a debate where we had to move swiftly to put in an unemployment benefits system so that individuals could receive compensation. But sometimes we are caught up looking at the figures that were actually spent and not discussing what those figures were spent on.

Individuals did not have money to feed themselves. Some individuals did not have money to pay rent. Some individuals did not have money to keep their lights on. I thank the companies, the banks and the utilities who have worked with Bermudians to make sure that they did have some level of ease during that period of time. But while the companies have discontinued the latitude they provided to residents this Government does not have that option. Thus far, Mr. Speaker, over \$70 million has been paid in unemployment benefits and other social protection to provide for our people and their families.

Mr. Speaker, we have to make a decision to extend the supplemental unemployment benefit because people have not had the opportunity to return to the labour force. Mr. Speaker, next time we are in the House we will be debating a Bill to extend financial assistance to able-bodied individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the decisions that we make impact the lives of individuals. A lot of individuals in the community rely on us to make provisions. And that is what we shall do because this party and this Government has adopted the mind-set that we work to provide for our people no matter the cost. So we quickly put social protections in place and we will continue extending social protections so that we can provide support for the people of this country.

MP Famous said it. Other countries have not and are not doing what we are doing regarding providing support to individuals within their countries. That speaks to our values. It speaks to our principles. It speaks to our beliefs.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with reforming financial assistance as well, because we do not want to create states of dependency. What we actually want to do is empower people so that they are financially independent. So we will put a programme in place for that. The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Finance are working on an unemployment insurance programme so that when people are temporarily displaced from the workforce, they have a social safety net that they can fall upon. The Wage Commission has submitted one of its two reports, which is the report on a minimum wage. Next, they will submit a report on a living wage. The Government can then make a decision as to how we move forward with a statutory minimum remuneration so that persons can get a full day's wage for a full day's work.

Everything that I have discussed thus far, Mr. Speaker, has been people centred. It has had our people at the forefront of our decision-making. Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, earlier this year when the Employment Amendment Act [2021] came into force. Amendments were made to the Employment Act 2000 to strengthen benefits for employees, to strengthen protections in the workforce for employees, to ensure that persons are working in dignified workplaces which are free of bullying and harassment. We have also gone a step further and created a policy to support businesses that did not have the capacity to create one.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has placed a moratorium on 41 additional job categories. There are 53 closed job categories. That is the most aggressive closure of job categories that we have ever done. That was done directly to ensure that we provide capacity in our labour market for Bermudians to get gainfully employed. Yes, MP Dunkley was correct. The business community is complaining. And this Government will meet with the Chamber of Commerce and have meaningful dialogue so that before July 31, 2021, everyone will be clear which job categories we will continue to restrict and which ones we may need to open up based on further identified shortages.

I am not just listening to the business community as to whether there are identified shortages. We have asked unemployed individuals to submit their résumés, Mr. Speaker. Over 500 résumés have been submitted. I personally reviewed 270 résumés. The picture in terms of our labour market is grim. We need to work together collectively, Government, businesses and the third sector, to get our people back to work. It is not without trying, Mr. Speaker. Because I wrote our national job strategy and I highlighted that we provided some level of training intervention to over 650 individuals. Out of that too, I highlighted where 70 persons had been directly employed. I also highlighted the use of the referral system through the Job Board where hundreds of persons have received jobs. But as we do our training efforts, it becomes ever more difficult in a contracting labour market, so that is why an extension of our social protections are important.

Mr. Speaker, you should note that there has been a public appeal for persons to try to take advantage as much as possible with the financial assistance that is provided through the Bermuda College. Where there are gaps in individuals who do not qualify for that assistance, the Department of Workforce Development will see if they can assist individuals especially in course areas where there is a higher demand for expatriate labour. We are working with professional agencies to get people employed. We continue to work with community stakeholders.

The majority of what we are doing in the Ministry of Labour is people centred. I know the pain of those persons who make the effort to apply for financial assistance but do not qualify, because they end

up in my office. We are all MPs in this community. There is no constituency that has not been negatively impacted. We do not have to continue to rehash the hurt that is in our community. We know what the cause of it is, and we need to collectively work together to find solutions. If not, the only people who suffer are the people of Bermuda.

I have been in this position for one year, Mr. Speaker. I have not taken a vacation. I spend my days trying to find solutions to assist our people. Quarantine and COVID-19 are not the only things happening in our economy. This Government has a lot to boast about in terms of the work it is actually doing. But there is no time to boast. We need to reassure the people of Bermuda that we are doing things that are in their best interests, which is contrary to the narrative that some people deliberately set out to say. Yes, the Government should be held to account for its actions. But certainly, we can stop some of this squabbling so that we can work together in the best interests of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, the pain and the hurt is real. I do not take my responsibility as a Minister within this Government lightly. I do not take my responsibility as an MP within this community lightly. I know I am here for a defined period of time. I choose not to squander my time in this particular position bickering when I can get on with the work required to move this country forward.

I also outlined what we are going to do in terms of immigration reform. I shifted the conversation in that immigration reform is much more than what we have discussed in the past. And we will work towards that. But there are some things that we have to do immediately. There are paradigm shifts that need to take place within our community. There has to be a general acceptance of what is required for us to have an economy that can grow, for us to have a greater level of social and economic development, the barriers that we had in the past, and the mind-set that we had in the past and the mind-set of now and in the future. So, we have been moving forward with some of those changes, Mr. Speaker.

I tried to look at immigration as a lever to support this country. And so, I have allowed persons, this Government has allowed persons—it is a team effort—to work from Bermuda. And we have had over 839 applications approved. No, we have not done the economic modelling to determine what the actual economic impact is. But nobody can deny the impact of persons who live here, participate in our community, shop at our stores. They add to the overall economy. Mr. Speaker, we have allowed the visitors to stay longer. We have more and more applications from persons who reside in Bermuda on an annual basis. As fast as we possibly can, the departments under the Cabinet Office are trying to facilitate business activity. We are meeting with the business community. And we are not meeting with the business community because

we have a mind-set that negates the needs of the people.

[NO AUDIO]

Hon. Jason Hayward: —for us to have a successful Bermuda. We do not have the luxury of it being one or the other. We cannot have social policies before our economy has the ability to pay for that social policy.

Mr. Speaker, I have said my intervention. It makes it absolutely clear that this Government is working hard on behalf of the people of Bermuda. I hope my intervention makes it clear that we have a way to go. And we can get there if we all work together to achieve common goals. While some want to bicker and squabble, that is their right. But there is hurt in our community, and we should focus our energies on improving our economy, providing opportunities to our people, especially our young people who are returning from university this year and looking for opportunities. So that is how my time will be spent, Mr. Speaker. That is how the time of the majority of MPs within the Progressive Labour Party will be spent, and my colleagues within the Cabinet.

We showed up on Wednesdays, we showed up on Tuesdays and we—

The Speaker: Minister, you have less than a minute left.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —things that would assist with moving Bermuda forward.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me that brief intervention.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Jackson?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Jackson, you have your 20 minutes.

BERMUDA TRAVEL AUTHORISATION FORM

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say a few words in reflection of my recent experience using the travel authorisation form. I travelled overseas. And my observation with the travel authorisation form is that when Bermudians are overseas, in the first instance it is rare that people have access to the equipment that is necessary to make a fulsome application through that platform. The other issue is that many people who

are travelling are not feeling well, or they may be older, or they may not have the digital sense that in the year of 2021 many people just organically accept and learn to use digital platforms with ease. But there is still a large population in Bermuda who travel and are overseas and may only have a small phone and may not have access to printers and coloured ink and all of the other requirements that are necessary in order to complete the travel authorisation form.

So, what I would just like to maybe suggest is that the Government might want to consider thinking about how they may be able to be a bit more flexible and make the travel authorisation form a little more customer friendly.

The other observation with the travel authorisation form, Mr. Speaker, is that in the United States, Canada and some of the other destinations that many of us travel to, the idea of the PCR test is not necessarily catering to the travel authorisation form. So there may be instances where the results are just not going to be available within the timeframe of the travel authorisation form, or they may be super expensive for the traveller who is overseas and, believe it or not, a little difficult to find unless you are with family or friends who live in the area.

So, I am saying all of that to say that it is not necessarily the fault of the Government of Bermuda or other, but maybe the Government could consider the limitations of the destinations where Bermudians are trying to access the information and get it inputted into this travel authorisation form, because it becomes a bit of a tangle when a person goes overseas, let's say for a visit for a week, which I would imagine is a pretty common duration to go overseas, and the immediate distraction as soon as they get off the plane, is having to go and try to find a PCR test place and then go through some of what I have just mentioned, costs, time to get results, et cetera. And then, having to fill out the travel authorisation form within a timeframe where now they have really lost most of their vacation because they have to submit the form to have basically a 24-hour turnaround.

I am saying all of that to say that I am not absolutely sure that the timing and the sequence of events in order to get all of the documents into the travel authorisation form are working as well as they could, and that it may be worth a bit of a review.

The other [matter], Mr. Speaker, is that I am just curious if there is not some way, given the fact that if somebody completes the travel authorisation form, they are paying the \$75 for the tests that they will need once they get back to Bermuda, that the vaccine certificate, if they have it, or their exemption medical form, or whatever is needed, is uploaded in its basic form and then the Bermudian travellers can bring back their test results without having to immediately necessarily have them in the system within that 24 hours, or however many hours are required for acceptance of the travel authorisation form. But maybe

they can bring them back to Bermuda. Clearly, you know I understand the piece around if they arrive back in Bermuda and their results end up being positive, but I am not very clear on that side of it. And if somebody wants to give some clarification, that is fine. If not, then I will do that work.

The other part of it is that I just find that the frustration for a number of constituents who have reported their experiences, and certainly my personal experience, I found that the sequence and the manner in which those travel authorisations require documentation to be quite complex. And I do not know the reason why. I mean, we just got a message today from a constituent where they would not accept . . . they would only accept a colour vaccination certificate instead of one that was black and white. I can't help but sympathise for the traveller trying to find the right printers, and not knowing if it needs to be colour. It is an emotional strain when people are travelling. And not everybody is travelling as a luxury. Like I mentioned, most of the people who have reported their experiences and frustrations have been abroad for medical reasons, which makes it just that much more traumatic.

So, I just am speaking on behalf of people who are writing in or calling to share their frustrations and to make it known that if there is any possibility that the travel authorisation form and some of the very strict bits in there that maybe do not need to be in there that maybe we could flex that ever so slightly to make the customer journey for our returning residents a little easier. I believe there are a number of people in our community that will appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Burch?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister, you have your 20 minutes.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I have sorted out my technical difficulties.

The Speaker: You sound nice and clear this time. We just can't see you at the moment.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: There we go.

The Speaker: Okay.

PLP GOVERNMENT BALANCING THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow in the footsteps of some of my colleagues who have talked about COVID-19 and this journey that we have been on for 17 months now.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Bermudians are special—all of us. And we think that the world revolves around our wishes and desires. But this journey that we have been on with COVID-19 is a journey where we have had a lot of company, Mr. Speaker. There are 7.9 billion people in the world, 175 countries, and all of us have gone through this journey for the very first time. The Premier and the Minister of Health seem to be the flavour-of-the-month for the critics, and are being accused of all manner of sins, as if they, and they alone, have been making these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the policy of the Government of Bermuda in relation to COVID-19 has to be owned by all 30 of us who form that Government. For a time, I was the chairman of the COVID-19 subcommittee of Cabinet. I still serve on it, but no longer as chairman. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have not made one decision without one thought in the forefront of our minds. Thirty-three Bermudians have died during this pandemic. There is not a day that goes by, or a meeting that is held, or any action taken in relation to COVID-19 that has that at the forefront of our minds. I do not know if I knew any of the people who died from COVID-19, because we have this strange thing (I think it's strange, anyway) where it is a big secret whether you have COVID-19 or not, just as it is a big secret whether you are vaccinated or not. So I don't know if I knew any of the people who have passed. But what I do know is that they are 33 of my fellow Bermudians.

In the early days we were doing very well. The first spike we had, Mr. Speaker, can be traced back to two individuals. So we have a 17-month history of how this disease is passed and what actions we can take in order to mitigate those circumstances.

I thought at the very beginning of this exercise when they came with wash your hands, wear a mask, and social distancing, that one of those came naturally to us as Bermudians. At least in my household and any of my friends' households, if you went in the house, the momma would ask *Have you children washed your hands?* And that has been the clarion cry throughout our existence pre-COVID-19. So, washing our hands comes naturally to us. And when we followed those rules, we bore the results of that action. We behaved, we followed the rules, we bore the benefits of doing that, and Bermudians did not die.

We are now again punching above our weight. We are one of the top 10 countries in the world for COVID-19 testing. We did that when nobody knew whether that would help us greatly or not. And

there was a fair amount of criticism about how it was done and who was used to do it. But the results have spoken for themselves. And, Mr. Speaker, those 325,000 tests were conducted—and that means there were 325,000 nose swabs or saliva swabs all of which have been done for free.

We can compare the actions of this Government in relation to COVID-19 to any other country in the world. Everybody is going through this exercise. And there are glaring examples today of countries that did not take the same actions as us who are bearing the results. They are having to shut down again and they are having to roll back actions that they have taken previously.

Mr. Speaker, none of us gets any joy out of imposing a curfew, rolling back rights and privileges. But we recognise that the science supports our actions. To date, Mr. Speaker, there have been 40,598 people in this country fully vaccinated. That is the majority of the population, Mr. Speaker. And that suggests clearly, and I am sure that is for a number of reasons, that a majority of people have taken our advice to speak to their doctors, to speak to people they trust if they are fearful or have concerns or questions about COVID-19, and take the best advice that you can for yourself. I don't know of anybody in this Government, or anybody I know in the country who has criticised anyone for deciding not to take the vaccine. That is your choice. But in making that choice, you separate yourself from the people who are vaccinated. And the scientific data supports that if you are vaccinated you can be extended certain courtesies that people who are not vaccinated cannot. And whilst that is discrimination, the decision is being made by those who claim to be discriminated [against].

Mr. Speaker, this Government has paid in excess (I have just learned from the Minister of Labour) of \$70 million—unbudgeted, unplanned for. But those decisions were made because we decided to feed our people rather than have them starve. We are still on that page in extending the unemployment benefit. Yes, it is costly. Yes, it is risky. Yes, it is expensive. But we are convinced that this is the right thing to do.

No one has criticised that exercise, Mr. Speaker. No one said we have been fiscally irresponsible in doing that. But I have to ask the question, Mr. Speaker: Why do people who are now criticising a process of mandatory quarantine where they have to pay for themselves and they can do it at home, and we've heard all of the arguments, Mr. Speaker . . . they cannot. We have been down this road before. We had quarantine at home months ago. And we found all sorts of infractions and infringements on it with people sneaking out and people inviting others in and aiding and abetting the challenges and spikes that we have had.

This decision was not made lightly. There were lots of discussion and lots of concerns, and lots

of issues, and lots of speculation about what the reaction would be. But it always comes down to what the science says, and our experience. Whilst we have followed the advice of the World Health Organization and also our regional public health partners Public Health England, Pan American Health Organization and Caribbean Public Health Agency, we have not sat in a dark room and made these decisions on our own. What we have done is looked at the world experience and reflected on the policies and the experiences we have had throughout the pandemic.

There are very few restrictions in place today. And that is as a result of our conduct and our behaviour and our research. And we are seeing the results of that. I do not think there is anybody who would not notice that there are tourists in the country. Not an over-abundance of them, but enough to cause you to notice. And if you use as a guide the white plates on the motorcycles, you will see them. Now, Mr. Speaker, all of those people, and many of the Bermudians who have travelled, and I have a bit . . . the travel authorisation. I have had to fill it out twice. Not since the adjustments have been made. But, Mr. Speaker, it is like any other preparations you make when you travel. You sit down and figure out what you have to do. And I can tell you that I do agree that the three-day allowance is a bit of a challenge. But it is manageable.

I think that the actual completion of the form is a lot simpler than people make it out to be. I think if you follow the rules it is one of the few online forms that I have used where you can actually take a picture of the document you have to upload. So you don't have to have it on your phone. And I am somewhat of a dinosaur. So I have all of my certificates printed out. And when it asks me to take a picture of the vaccine certificate or the test certificate, I stick it up on a wall, take a picture of it. It asks *Do you like this one? Yes or no*. And I say yes, it goes. If I say no, I take another one. You just have to take a few minutes to sort it out.

A similar thing is required in order to travel to the United States. You have to get a test, you have to fill out . . . well, you can fill out a form in Bermuda. They will fill it out for you at the airport if you do not fill it out. But there are processes, just like you have to remember to take your passport and money and addresses to where you have to go. It is another step in the exercise. And I know that the Ministry of Health has taken some steps to make it even easier for those who are computer challenged to be able to get assistance before they leave. All of these actions, Mr. Speaker, are designed to keep us safe. And we have 17 months of experience which tells us that if we follow those rules we will be kept safe.

The recent criticism about the TAF and the quarantine facility for somebody like me is really quite simple. You can disagree. You can choose to ignore the rules. But you must do so with the full knowledge that you are breaking the law. And in so doing, I would expect that you would accept that in breaking the law

you would have to suffer the consequences of breaking the law. Most of us who speed, or go slightly over the 30 km speed limit, have in the back of our minds the full knowledge that if we are caught, we are definitely going to be fined, but we are likely going to be going off the road, and we weigh that in the balance. Is it worth the risk or not? Most fellows say it is worth the risk. And we see it. We have seen in the last week or so that the police have been issuing tickets so it causes everybody to pause and reflect.

Mr. Speaker, I also think the recent protest has a lot less to do with health and more to do with politics. I look at the people who are involved. They are our political opponents. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that if we had said the opposite they would disagree, and have probably disagreed. But, Mr. Speaker, the suggestion today that we are not listening to the people of this country, I say is false. If you are a PLP member, and certainly if you are a PLP Member of Parliament, you know about talking to the people. We are good at that. We do it on a regular basis, during, before, after and throughout the period between elections. So during this period we have talked to our constituents. When we were in shelter in place and restricted numbers, we did it via Zoom. Now we are back on the campaign trail and doing it in person and via clinics. So we have our finger on the pulse in our districts. And if you don't then you shouldn't be elected.

Let's say that everybody you talk to agrees with what we are doing. Certainly not! Everybody of the 30 of us does not agree with everything we are doing. That is normal. But you don't change your position because you disagree on one issue. You have to balance the entire exercise. Six months ago there were confirmed congratulations on 30 seats on the work that the PLP Government has done to address COVID-19. That has not changed. In the forefront of our minds, every decision that is made is to protect the health and life of Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, just because you shout the loudest and hide your identity and name, you cannot win. In a democracy the majority rules. And clearly, in this exercise the majority is ruling. I think that the quarantine requirements have an expiry date. They are not going to be with us forever. I see a date, if we can get to 70 per cent or 75 per cent of persons vaccinated, you will not even have this discussion.

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

The Acting Speaker: Minister, you have one minute.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: One minute?

The Acting Speaker: Yes. One minute, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Okay, I will skip to the ending then.

Madam Acting Speaker, we have governed with one thing at the forefront of our minds throughout this exercise. And that is every decision we make is in order to protect the health and wealth of the people of Bermuda and to minimise the deaths. Thirty-three is 33 too many. Every action we take is designed to ensure that we go no higher than 33. And we will continue to work to the best of our abilities to protect the security of Bermuda and to support the rights of the citizens of this country.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak at this time?

Mr. Wayne Caines: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that MP Caines?

Mr. Wayne Caines: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, MP Caines, you have the floor. Do you have your video camera on?

Mr. Wayne Caines: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker, my camera is on.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, thank you. You have 20 minutes.

PLP FOCUSED AND UNITEDLY TACKLING THE ISSUES—*You are speaking to Minister Hayward*

Mr. Wayne Caines: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. If I had to name my 20 minutes this afternoon, I would entitle it “You are speaking to Minister Hayward.”

Over the last few weeks, over the last 15 to 16 months, we have had a period of differences in opinion.

The Acting Speaker: Member, before you continue, I am still unable to see you. Can anybody attest if they can see him? He is not showing up on my screen.

Some Hon. Members: Yes, we can see him.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Sorry for the interruption.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Hello, can you see me?

Some Hon. Members: We can see you.

Mr. Wayne Caines: If I had to entitle this it would be “You are speaking to Minister Hayward.”

I had the opportunity over the last 15 months to consider differences in opinions from political col-

leagues, differences in opinions of medical experts, differences in opinions of family members, differences in opinions from armchair quarterbacks, neighbours and friends. Everybody had an opinion of what COVID-19 is, what COVID-19 was, medicines that we should take, modalities of healing, what antibodies are, everybody had their view.

Looking online, talking to friends, speaking to medical experts, going to medical books, talking to gurus, talking to friends, organising trips, going abroad, everybody became an expert. Unlike 25 years ago when we had limited founts of information and limited access to information, everyone had access to information at their fingertips based on the Internet. This access to information led to people going to their corners and becoming experts.

Politics affected the landscape in that the Government has had a mandate and its mandate has been different. Ultimately, when you mulch it down, when it is synthesized, when it is broken down, the Government’s responsibility is to protect the people of Bermuda. And they have done things that a segment of the community has not agreed with. Now, let us stop there for a moment.

If you are in a relationship with a friend, with a wife, with a husband, with a mother, with a father, with a dad, with a colleague, there are times when you have differences where you have fundamental disagreements. A part of human nature is that we have the right to have our opinion. And we have come to a point in our country’s history where we have gotten to specific places and we have become so deeply entrenched in our opinion that many of us have forgotten that we are a family, that we are a race, that we are the human race, that we are Bermudian families. We have lost our killer.

If you go on social media, the mind becomes flummoxed with the arguing, with the fighting, with the backbiting, with the putting down of Government Ministers, highlighting the differences that we have. Why? Because we are at the most difficult time in our country’s history. Often times when you are in a difficult set of circumstances, you are forced to consider what you are truly made of. In some circumstance, we have seen the essence of what some people are made of.

Here is the thing. I believe that sometimes we have differences. I talked to my younger brother, and he shared with me his views on vaccination. He does not support it. He does not support what the Government is doing. My mother, who I love more than life, does not believe in the vaccination. She believes that is her right, she believes that her faith and in a lot of things she is doing makes her not need the vaccine. And we disagree vehemently on that. You see I am vaccinated. But here is the thing. I agree with my mother’s right to disagree with me; and with my brother’s right to disagree with me. But that does not change that we have a different set of responsibilities.

The Government has a different set of responsibilities. So, here we were at a point in our country's history where we were looking at citizens that got vaccinated, and some of us are not in a decision-making mood anymore. And you are looking at things that you disagree with, but you are not at the tip of the sword and every time you make a decision there are going to be people who agree with you and people that disagree with you. But here is the thing. We, as a party struggle to make sure that we were not becoming what we hate the most. And what was that?

You saw December 2. You saw the 1981 riots. But people did not listen, they did not take on the words and the guidance and the [INAUDIBLE] and the pandemic. So we had to regroup and listen. And we were able to go back in our Chambers, close our door and have difficult conversations and we saw a lot of the legislation change and soften in certain areas. But as a party we grew, as an organisation we grew. We were forced to understand that even though we had differences in opinion we still had a common cause.

So, if a person disagrees with the vaccine and they do not want to get vaccinated, they still have value. They are still important. We don't hate them because they have made a difficult decision. As a matter of fact, in certain circumstances, as long as it does not affect the health of everyone else and the mission, we have made changes to make it more palatable. But guess what. We still have a mission and that is to keep the people of Bermuda safe. What does that look like? Look at the numbers. The numbers have gone down. The deaths have gone down.

Remember, I am not saying that the person who does not believe in the vaccine should be forced to be vaccinated. I believe that life is sacred. I believe that the gift of choice is sacred. But remember the responsibility that Government has. When you see people go on social media, when you see people march, when you see people protest, when you see their courage show, when you see talk shows, when you see their rights, they have the privilege to openly demonstrate. They have the privilege to go down to Cabinet Office and stand and challenge the Premier. That is the democracy that we live in. And I am proud to see people in this country stand for what they believe in.

If for some people this is the first time they are being activists, thank you for joining the struggle. If for some people in this country it is their first time feeling what it is like not being in the mainstream, welcome to the party.

A man came back with a plan. And I do not knock this man. I saw a post equating him to Martin Luther King, [Jr.]. And whilst I respect you and what you are trying to do, sir, you are no Martin Luther King, [Jr.].

Sir, you are no Martin Luther King, [Jr.]!

This is an opportunity for us to do things differently. How do I know? I know that our churches are

back open, our community centres are back open, our social clubs are back open, our family gatherings are back open. I was able to celebrate my father's day! Can you believe it? We missed my 50th, but I was able to hug my father, [INAUDIBLE] my father at the house. It was under 50 people, but we were able to celebrate my father's 50th. The restaurants are open. We are hugging each other, smiling, kissing each other.

We know that we still have to keep certain rules in place and certain regulations in place. But guess what. I have always been a person who views the cup as half full. I believe in the sanctity of life. I believe in doing what is best for Bermuda. I believe that we have to come together. I believe that we can [disagree]. I believe that we can be on television. I believe that we can be on social media without denigrating each other, without denigrating our leadership, without putting our leaders down. We always have the ability to disagree. I believe that is fundamental. But things being [INAUDIBLE] in difficult times, difficult days. And guess what. If you think that we are homogeneous in thought, meaning if you think we all sit back and agree on all things, that oftentimes we do not. And we have to face the very essence of who and what this party is. And at the end, what I am happy to say is that we always come out mission focused. Why? It is because we remember what we are here for.

When we go around and learn that one of our constituents is sick, they call a Member of Parliament to come to the house to pray with their family, to sit by them in the hospital. And everybody is calling on the telephone. We get the calls. They don't send the emails to their families. They do not make the calls to the people bringing them down. They call their Member of Parliament. I want you to hear that. When they are broken, when they need help, when they need guidance, when they need advice, they are coming to their Members of Parliament. Even in this pandemic they are coming to us to give them guidance, to give them help, to try to help them find a job, to sign the back of their [INAUDIBLE], give a reference for their child, give them guidance, tell them who to go to for a doctor. That is what they see their Members of Parliament for.

So sometimes we focus so much on that which is bad, that which is [INAUDIBLE] we forget that there are a number of people in this country that do not use the Internet, that are not vociferous in their angry, tortured, nasty writing that they still respect who we are and what we do and how we help. So we know that we are not perfect, and that we have very far to go. We have to stay focused. And we have to stay dedicated to what we are doing.

I went to a home on a professional visit for my job, and the lady was sitting there [INAUDIBLE] and she was upset. And she looked at me and said, *I need to speak to my MP Jason Hayward.*

I said, *I beg your pardon.*

She said, *I have some problems.* (Watch this, Madam Acting Speaker.) She said, *I need to speak to my MP, Jason Hayward. I have some problems. I need to get some advice.*

I said, *Ma'am you are speaking to Minister Jason Hayward. What's the problem? How can I serve you?*

She said, *I'm confused.*

I said, *You are speaking to Minister Jason Hayward.*

Madam Acting Speaker, I knew that Jason was up to his eyeballs dealing with immigration matters and meeting with members of Cabinet. So what she saw as the Minister not being available, I saw as my opportunity to say, *He is not heavy, he is my brother.* And I was able to jump in with that and stand and tell her that she was speaking to Minister Hayward.

Now, in thinking [INAUDIBLE] Progressive Labour Party, we were put in place to support, to guide and to govern the people of Bermuda. Again, we are not perfect. Again, we will make mistakes. But we have to view tonight as a reset. We were put in office to govern the people of Bermuda, to take advice, to listen and to work hard and we will continue to do that.

Yes, we will take licks. And we have been taking strikes over the last few months. But guess what. What you do not know is that when you put down the keypad and get off your WhatsApp [INAUDIBLE] we still work, we still go to homes, we still go to those [INAUDIBLE], Wednesday night, Tuesday night meetings. We still go to our communities. When you drive across the South Shore tomorrow, look at our Minister Lawrence Scott, he is on his post in Southampton. He is on his post in Warwick. And he has people there building that community together. When you have a chance, go down to constituency 1 and Minister Ming (she's from St. George's but the number one Somerset friend), she walks in her constituency to make sure they stay healthy. If you look at what everyone is doing, even with all of the burden of [INAUDIBLE] with all of the hardship they are here to serve the people of Bermuda.

We have always, always, allowed the small to take over the ring. So, people in this country, this party is dedicated to you, is working hard for you. We are not perfect. We have to keep going to the drawing board. There are times when we have fought over the issues surrounding quarantine, wondering what we are going to do. We are stronger as a party to find [the] centre. We accept that the decision that was made was the best thing for many. We support and honour and respect those who have different views on vaccination, have different views on quarantine. But we still have a mandate to do that which is right for this country. And we will still continue to do it.

July 17 marks four years for this party being in power. I can tell you this: If this Government were not in power, I shudder to think what state this country would be in now. So guess what. We understood that this time was going to be difficult. But we are still standing. As a country we are still thriving. We have a ways to go, so let's focus on getting the economy back together. Let's focus on making sure that our families remain stronger. And I challenge, Madam Acting Speaker, for us to now find opportunities for each other, to give each other a helping hand, to help those amongst us who need learning support, who need emotional support. Instead of writing those emails, those [INAUDIBLE] messages, those Facebook messages, those Instagram messages, those Tweets that denigrate or pull down your Members of Parliament or your colleagues, why don't we, as a country, make this the night of the reset for reaching out and encouraging each other, motivating each other, finding things that keep us together, that bind us, that make us stronger. That is the only way we are going to prove what Bermudians are made of.

Madam Acting Speaker, I remember being a boy and my father and his brothers putting in windows. Oh, not one person came, but my brother came and the entire community came, putting those windows in, putting shingles on [INAUDIBLE] Madam Acting Speaker. But the truth of the matter is, everyone was working together to make our community stronger. We must reverse back to that which made us stronger.

Lower the tone of the argument. Lower the tone of the rhetoric. Understand that the rules have been put in place to make us protected. And when we disagree with them, disagreement is okay, not [INAUDIBLE] rights. We understand the sacredness of individual rights. We will acknowledge that a person's will should not be broken for any purpose. We get that. But I can tell you that we are going to continue to work hard. We are going to continue to work for our constituents, and continue to throw out their seeds.

Madam Acting Speaker, last week I saw a post from somebody in my constituency. And she shared with me that the mirrors on [INAUDIBLE] field were not working. To the average person that doesn't mean anything. That is not significant in any way. But imagine if you were a mom and your child was in the back of the car and you go to cross a very busy junction . . . it was my responsibility to stop everything that I was doing for this constituent who raised a flag that was important to her. And because it was important to her, it was important to me, and because it was important to me, it was important to the Premier. And because it was important to the Premier, it was important to [Senator] Owen [Darrell], it was important to Vincent, it was important to Wayne Campbell. Why? Because we all are [Minister] Jason Hayward.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member. I hope that when it is time for you to represent the women, you are able to take on the female persona and do the great job that you did representing Minister Hayward.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Mr. Jache Adams: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: With whom am I speaking?

Mr. Jache Adams: MP Adams.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, MP Adams. You have the floor. You have 20 minutes.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

Mr. Jache Adams: Madam Acting Speaker, I must say that this evening I have the unenviable task of following MP Caines with his passionate and emotional speech on the motion to adjourn. But nonetheless, I will continue.

Madam Acting Speaker, it has come to me a common quote that I often use, and it says that it is not the strongest or most intelligent that survive; but rather, the one most adaptable to change. So, what we have here today is evidence of how true those words really are.

Madam Acting Speaker, MP Cannonier continued to demonstrate this evening the big reason why he, as the then Leader of the OBA, lost the last election. He refuses to adapt. He keeps coming with the same routine we have seen time and time again.

Madam Acting Speaker, this evening I will not raise my voice. I will not bang on tables. I will not perform a tirade, because there is nothing to hide. So let's get to the truth.

Number 1, let me simply start by putting this to bed early and say that the board approved the NSC loan in May of this year.

Number 2, Atlantic Energy Solutions Group (AESG) was a successful bidder in a public tender offering. It is as simple as that. The decision to proceed with AESG was then confirmed independently by a local large engineering company. AESG was considered successful prior to Damon Wade becoming chairman of the best party in this country. Almost three years of review and analysis took place, Madam Acting Speaker, with no one complaining from AESG, no one complaining from the Government, no one complaining from the National Sports Centre. But we wanted to get it right, and we could not proceed until we were comfortable that we did.

Madam Acting Speaker, since the project began (here is what is interesting), everything has been going according to plan. Everything has been going exactly on what was agreed. I know that this is not the sensationalized story that the OBA wants the public to

believe, but it is the truth. What the Honourable Member is going to be disappointed to hear is that the letter he is referring to was not supported by any other board member.

But, Madam Acting Speaker, since we are in the mood of asking questions, I would like to ask some of my own. Why are they so against the Government providing opportunities for Bermudians? I can recall the Opposition Leader saying while we were discussing the Economic Recovery Plan that the document needed to be simpler for the average Bermudian. Madam Acting Speaker, why does the OBA constantly undermine the intelligence and capabilities of our people?

Madam Acting Speaker, who would they prefer received the contract? Another Canadian company?

Madam Acting Speaker, no matter how many times the Opposition tries to spin this and try to make this look guilty, the truth is a Bermudian company won a public tendering offer based on the qualifications and experience on a project that will provide the Government cost savings and allow the National Sports Centre to run more efficiently.

Madam Acting Speaker, I notice the Honourable Member did not mention the \$600,000 BELCO bill that this project is expected to virtually eliminate. There is no mention of the Bermudian jobs that this project will create. There is no mention of the increased value for the taxpayer money. You see, then I start to think to myself, *I can't be the only one who finds it rich that a man who would take money to go on a jet ride has the audacity, the gall, to beat his chest in this ludicrous manner.*

Madam Acting Speaker, I can vividly recall a certain Member stating publicly when he became the Opposition Leader that he would tell all, and yet, ironically, three years later, we have heard nothing. I believe the Honourable Member has shown his hand because it is quite clear where he received that information because I have heard the same questions many times before. So, I hope that he is better able to explain those answers than I can, because I have tried. For example, Madam Acting Speaker, the Honourable Member proceeds to speak about a monthly fee of \$12,000 for so many years, when no such agreement exists. And so he is literally going to have to come back to this House and retract yet another baseless statement.

Madam Acting Speaker, with that, I am going to close because I wish the Honourable Member well on his deep dive. And, more importantly, I hope that he looks for a new source of information.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, Premier. Is that you?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, it is me.

The Acting Speaker: You must have a magic camera because you are the only one who has come that I can see.

Hon. E. David Burt: I understand. Madam Acting Speaker, I will tell you the honest to God truth, I contemplated not speaking after the Member from constituency 19 gave that amazing retort to the Honourable Member from constituency 12.

The Acting Speaker: Are you speaking, Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am!

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to close this out this motion to adjourn, it's time for us to go home.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. You have 20 minutes.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I appreciate that.

Madam Acting Speaker, earlier today we witnessed a despicable innuendo-laced attack on private citizens and Members of this House under the cloak of parliamentary privilege without even the decency of even trying to ascertain the facts by putting the matter into a parliamentary question. And as the Honourable Member from constituency 9 just stated, how can the contract that took 33 months to put together, was scrutinised time and time again, that is going to save taxpayer money, create jobs, make more efficiency, make our economy greener and better, all of a sudden, a bad thing?

And it is just rich that this is coming from a former Premier who was a Minister of Public Works in a Government that gave a \$40 million no-bid contract to build Cross Island that has cost the Government of Bermuda \$4.3 billion a year. This project saves the Government money. And we are having a debate? Come on now. The most important thing to know is that we have rules, we have laws and they continue to be upgraded. It is but sound and fury as the Opposition wants to create it. It is just that, sound and fury not backed up by facts. So the Honourable Member from constituency 19 has stated clearly what exactly the Honourable Member from constituency 12 was saying earlier today.

But what this is, Madam Acting Speaker, is political opportunism at its finest from the One Bermu-

da Alliance. I will just give you a couple of examples before I move on, Madam Acting Speaker. We heard the former Premier and the former Minister of National Security, calling on the Government of Bermuda to enforce the law, when he knows full well, as a former Premier and a former Minister of National Security, that enforcement is a matter for Government House and a matter for the police. So, instead of calling on the people who enforce the law to enforce the law, he goes with a press statement to his best friends at the *Royal Gazette*, and calls the Government names, rather than in just the regular fashion, obfuscation of what he does, when he knows better.

PLP GOVERNMENT FOCUSED AND UNITEDLY TACKLING THE ISSUES

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Acting Speaker, I am just going to run a third point of political opportunism. I remember a press statement 12 days ago from the Honourable Opposition Leader who spoke about how the country was being deprived a debate on quarantine regulations and how the Government has held up a motion to be debated and after all of that, Madam Acting Speaker, after two-weeks' times, was there a motion on the Order Paper from the Opposition today? No, there was not. No motion whatsoever. So, what I will say is political opportunism because if the One Bermuda Alliance was so against the Government's measures to protect our borders, then why did they not lay down that motion today?

Why not, Madam Acting Speaker? It is because they are playing politics. The worst type of politics.

So we have heard a number of Members from this side speak, Madam Acting Speaker, and it has been a very good motion to adjourn. And like the four last Members who spoke before, who spoke on my side before—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Premier, the Speaker has taken the Chair so you can acknowledge him.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: All right. It is so good to see the red and blue tie. Madam Acting Speaker, I like your ensemble.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Blue and blue all the way! I am taking advantage while I am the Acting Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: At least his tie matches mine!
Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Continue on, Premier.

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

So here is the difference. While their candidates troll press conferences and stand outside, we work. While they look to attack and demonise people in society, Mr. Speaker, we work. When they pen fake WhatsApp forwards talking all type of nonsense, attempting to sow division in this community, we, as a team of 29 Members of the House of Assembly who will fly the PLP banner, we work. When they look to sow division, Mr. Speaker, we work together to make sure that this country gets better.

So, the truth is that unity and focus are required. And we cannot be distracted. We have heard a lot of things over the past few weeks. And as I have always said when I speak here, this Government is not perfect. I am not perfect. No one is perfect. And every time there is a need to examine what it is we need to do better. But here is what I can say, Mr. Speaker: When other countries are seeing surges in cases, when other countries are having to re-implement restrictions, when other countries are finding themselves having to close down shops and stores and everything else after reopening their borders to tourists, we are not, because we believe that what we have constructed is a very strong border control policy, Mr. Speaker, which can assist us in moving forward.

As many Members have said today, the most important thing is to take care of the people we serve. I cannot imagine having to be in a place and tell students they cannot go to school, children cannot go to summer camps, persons cannot open up businesses, and people have to stay at home, the hospital is about to overflow. We are not going to do that again, Mr. Speaker. We learn from experience, and we have to move on. So, when you see places like BVI, we see places like Barbados, we see places like Australia back in lockdown, and we see the United Kingdom who has reported their highest figure of cases in six months, that is not a place where we want to be. We do not want businesses closing down all over the country because people are quarantined. We do not want those challenges. So that is the reason why it is important that we stay the course, Mr. Speaker.

Now, as many persons have said, it is a very delicate road. And it is a delicate, delicate, delicate balance. Here is what I can say: With our strong border protections our country is returning to normal. As Members have said before, restaurants are open, bars are open, summer camps are open, gyms are open, movie theatres and bowling alleys and retail stores are open. Large events can happen. And the only restrictions inside of our country, Mr. Speaker, are that you have to wear masks indoors, and if you are going to host an event larger than the limit, which is 50, you let the Government know so we can ensure the event is held safely and minimise any risk of it being a super-spreader event.

So, when I hear all of these things about *you have to open the country* I have to respond, *what is closed?* We are in a fortunate position in this country. And though there is a division that we see, we have to stay focused on what is necessary. We cannot let the selfish actions of a few undermine the collective progress of this country. We have come so far because whether or not we like the science, we have followed the science, and because we have all done our part as a country.

So what I want to do tonight, Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Eastern Counties where we are going to have a safety event where there will be over a thousand persons who will be able to watch sporting games, which they cannot do in Barbados because sporting events have to be held behind closed doors, what I want to do is to thank the vast majority, the 99 per cent of people in this country, who follow the laws, follow the rules, follow the guidelines, know that the threat is real and are working with the Government to ensure that we can continue to keep our country open. I want to thank them.

I am not going to focus on the minority, the very small persons, people who are politically agitated, people who wilfully disobey the law, people who are wilfully going around filming themselves disobeying the law to try to cause chaos in this country. Do you know what pleases me, Mr. Speaker? It pleases me that the vast majority of the country looks at them and say, *What are you doing?*

In this country we have hotel workers back to work. Our planes are full. Some of our hotels are seeing occupancy figures that they saw in 2019. The Government, through the Minister of Transport, has secured additional cruise ships that are coming in August, Mr. Speaker. We are in a good and strong position to build. And what we cannot do is allow persons who want to tear us apart, to tear us apart from the unity of which we created which has driven us to this point where we are able to be a success story to the world.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as some Members have mentioned, on Sunday it will be four years since the election of this Government. On Monday it will be four years that I have served in this office. So, on Tuesday it will be the four-year anniversary of the PLP Cabinet and this Government. I want to say thank you to all of the Members of this House who serve on this side who continue to support the work of this Government in many different ways. We support by voicing our disagreements internally, scrutinising our decisions and making sure that they are the best possible. We support by working inside of our communities. From East End of the Island, the Honourable Member Renee Ming, Kim Swan, Lovitta Foggo, Tinee [Furbert] up there making sure that feeding programmes happen week in and week out, just like in Devonshire Parish pride, just like how they are doing in Warwick by making sure they are there all the time,

what we are doing in Pembroke, what we are doing in Sandys Parish, even out there in Smith's where we have MPs in Hamilton Parish. All throughout this country, Mr. Speaker, we are working week in, week out, on the doorstep taking care of our residents.

I want to thank the workers of this party who take the licks for the decisions that they are not responsible for making but support the party because they recognise that our objectives are pure. And I want to thank the people of this country, Mr. Speaker, who continue to put their faith in us. We are not perfect. But we are doing the best that we can to make sure that this country is safe.

So on this anniversary, Mr. Speaker, and on this weekend, I just want to say thank you to all. I sincerely hope that we have a blessed weekend. I look forward to seeing everyone again next weekend, Mr. Speaker. And to you, Mr. Speaker, who will not be here, I hope that you have a very happy Cup Match and continue to wear that wonderful red and blue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Members, that now brings today's [sitting] to a close. I thank all Members who have contributed today. The Premier just mentioned that I will not be present next week, and he is correct. You will be in the capable hands of the Deputy Speaker, and I had the honourable chair member, MP Foggo sit in today just so she can be warmed up in case she needs to assist the Deputy Speaker next week.

But Members, I trust you will be fruitful next week in your debates. Enjoy the Cup Match holiday. I expect to see a two-day visit for the cup and then it will return home afterwards.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Have a great, great Cup Match season! Thank you.

Good night.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Good night. Blue and blue all the way!

[At 7:50 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am Friday, 23 July 2021.]

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING****23 JULY 2021****10:06 AM***Sitting Number 23 of the 2020/2021 Session*

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Today is July 23. We will have prayers by Ms. Beale.
Ms. Beale.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 16 July 2021]

The Deputy Speaker: The Minutes for the 16th of July. [Are there] any objections to confirming the Minutes?

There appear to be none.
The Minutes are confirmed.

[Minutes of 16 July 2021 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Deputy Speaker: There are no messages from the Governor.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Deputy Speaker: There are no announcements.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: There are no messages from the Senate.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Deputy Speaker: Premier Burt, you have one.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How are you?

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning. I'm fine, and you?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not too bad, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**TOURISM INVESTMENT
(NAUTILUS HOTEL) ORDER 2021**

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Tourism Investment (Nautilus Hotel) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism with a written agreement from the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.
Minister Dickinson, you also have one, a paper.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, Minister.

**ISSUANCE OF NEW
GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Issuance of New Government Guarantees, in accordance with section 2AA(3) of the Government Loans Act 1978. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister Dickinson.
Minister Rabain, Minister of Education.

**BERMUDA COLLEGE AUDITED FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020**

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda College Audited Fi-

financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2020. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Education, Mr. Rabain.

PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are no petitions.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Deputy Speaker: The first Statement comes from the Honourable Colonel Burch. Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be reading the Statement for Minister Burch.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Minister Rabain.

TYNES BAY PLANT CRITICAL STATUS REPORT

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to provide this Honourable House with a report on the now critical status of the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy Facility, what it means to us as a community and what the Government is currently doing about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the [Tynes Bay Facility](#), located on Palmetto Road in Devonshire, is a mass burn waste-to-energy plant which combusts refuse and produces high-pressure steam for power production, generating some 125,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per day. Most of that power is sold into the BELCO power grid. But about a third of it is utilised internally, both to power the plant itself, as well as the Tynes Bay Seawater Reverse Osmosis plant next door, which produces some 750,000 gallons of fresh water per day, all from renewable energy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that due to the synergistic relationship with the reverse osmosis plant, Tynes Bay was mentioned as an integral part of the Water and Waste Water Master Plan. This plan will see Tynes Bay repurposed as a renewable energy hub for a combined waste and water utility that will treat sewage and will produce both potable and non-potable water, with garbage as its primary energy source. We have high hopes for the success of this project as it will create a number of environmental benefits for the Island as well as provide new opportunities for creative financing for the government. But while this plan will provide for the future, we unfortunately still have to deal with the here and now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Waste and Water Master Plan remains the long-term solution for Tynes Bay, and the water and waste water infrastructure in

general. But unfortunately, time has caught up with us and the plant's current state now requires swift action even ahead of the Waste and Water Master Plan. Many of you may recall that the plant is now over 25 years old and has undergone one major refurbishment some 10 years ago. While this investment has prolonged the life of the plant, there are now components that are reaching the end of their useful life, with full replacement being the only option. This means that a total plant upgrade—which will span some three to five years—needs to start now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is truly hard to depict the true value the service Tynes Bay provides to our community. While many focus on the collection (and sometimes non-collection) of our garbage, few are fully aware of what happens to that garbage once it leaves our curbside week in and week out by the dedicated collections teams. To many it just magically disappears, but to the engineers, technicians and skilled personnel who work at Tynes Bay, it is a constant battle to process the never-ending stream of garbage which arrives at a rate of some 200 to 300 tons per day. If not for Tynes Bay, that same garbage would find itself either destroying what's left of Pembroke Marsh—in the form of an un-engineered landfill—or festering on our curbsides and being burned in trash barrels like we used to do decades ago. This would result in an increase in the rodent population that no one wants to see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is certainly not the Bermuda we wish to return to, and thus it should be somewhat sobering to hear that, with the current state of the plant, we could return to these conditions at any time—if we do nothing. While I have painted a bleak outlook of the present reality, and it is indeed reality, I also wish to ensure the public that this Government has chosen to face this reality head-on and has already approved the go-ahead of a full refurbishment of the facility ahead of the Waste and Water Master Plan. Tynes Bay is simply too important a service to let fail. And while there will be years of hard work to arrive at a final solution, I can assure you that work towards that final solution has already begun.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will continue to give updates of this work as it unfolds and will keep the public abreast of our challenges, solutions and inevitable successes.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. [Do] you have another Statement, Minister, for Bermuda College?

BERMUDA COLLEGE: 2020 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning I rise before this Honourable House to lay the [2020 Audited Finan-](#)

[cial Statements for the Bermuda College](#), as stipulated in section 8 of the Bermuda College Act 1974.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to report that the 2020 audited statements are “unqualified” and as such, in the opinion of the Auditor General, the statements present fairly the financial position of the Bermuda College as at March 31, 2020, and the results of its operations, changes in its net assets and its cash flows. The financial statements indicate that Bermuda College had assets worth \$22,535,958 and total liabilities of \$18,236,334.

Additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that the Bermuda College currently has no long-term debt. Cash and cash equivalents for the fiscal period decreased by 10.7 per cent to \$3,104,426. The accounts receivable increased by 22.3 per cent to \$1,062,359, and the accounts payable increased by 9.8 per cent and stood at \$2,957,052 at the end of the 2020 fiscal year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the net book value of capital assets as at March 31, 2020, was \$15,555,788, down 6.6 per cent, or \$1,093,366, from last year’s total. With the Bermuda College Foundation now functioning, it is anticipated that the College’s asset base and associated depreciation will increase over time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, the Government operational grant increased by \$125,000 while other revenues increased marginally by \$13,570. However, during the same period, academic services, administration expenses and public relations increased by \$622,690, resulting in a deficit of \$483,616 at the end of the 2020 fiscal period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the past several years, Bermuda College and the Office of the Auditor General have worked assiduously to get the College’s audits up to date in order for the Bermuda College to comply with the financial standards of its accreditors. Last year, with the tabling of its 2018 and 2019 audited statements, all outstanding audits for Bermuda College were completed; and with the tabling of the 2020 audited financial statements, Bermuda College audits are all up to date.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking ahead, the audited file for the year ended March 31, 2021, is currently with the Office of the Auditor General and the audit is scheduled to begin planning meeting scheduled for July 16, 2021. The audit is expected to be completed by September 30, 2021, as per the Bermuda College Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing, acknowledgement and thanks are given to the former Auditor General, Mrs. Heather Jacobs-Matthews; the current Auditor General, Ms. Heather Thomas; and the team at the Office of the Auditor General for their efforts in helping to bring Bermuda College up to date with its audits. Thanks are also extended to faculty and staff at the Bermuda College, under the leadership of Pres-

ident, Dr. Duranda Greene, for their support and continued commitment to deliver quality tertiary education to the broad community.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Minister Rabain, you have another Statement.

PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION DECISION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government promised that we would finally be the Government that took education reform seriously. If there is one thing on which we all agree, it should be that our decisions around education must always consider what is best for our children today and for future generations. Over the past four years, we have set about bringing real and tangible education reform to provide an education system that puts our children first and prepares them for 21st century opportunities within an equitable and sustainable system. Our children must be educated to lead personally and professionally, compete locally and contribute globally.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning I rise to share with my honourable colleagues the decisions around the [Parish Primary Schools](#) Proposal. Last night I announced that the Bermuda Public School System would move forward with parish primary schools. This plan will see one primary school per parish, with two primary schools in Pembroke, for a total of 10 primary schools, 8 fewer than the 18 primary schools we currently use.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there has been one consistent cry from the people of Bermuda about education, it has been said time and time again that the decisions around education need to be free of political influence and decisions should be more about what is best for our children. In fact, on Tuesday I accepted a petition supporting the retention of a particular school by four gentlemen from Sandys. I was struck by one of their comments which implored me, and I quote, “Do not make this decision based on politics. Our children lose out when that is done.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we used well-thought-out and defined criteria that identified the best existing school site in each parish that could be redeveloped or rebuilt into the primary school of the future. One that would provide the required facility to complement the current work being done to redesign how teachers teach and how children learn, the revising of the curriculum and the creating of an equitable system and to achieve the vision of primary schools that exist of and for the parish and the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been hard at work since January 2020 preparing the proposal for parish primary schools and thinking deeply about how best to engage the public in a robust and meaningful

consultation on the proposal. Starting from the consultation document released in December 2020, followed by 24 Zoom meetings with internal and external stakeholders, we spent a lot of time engaging with and listening to the public and their thoughts about the parish primary school proposal. The engagement sessions starting in January 2021 have led us to today, July 2021, and the decisions that were announced last night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the engagement sessions garnered 121 written submissions, 434 individual questions and over 1,000 signatories. After the originally scheduled engagement sessions, further sessions were conducted with representatives of St. George's and the Sandys communities. As a result, there was a change in the proposal for Devonshire Parish based on the alternatives provided during the consultation sessions. This level of engagement is a testament to the importance of the decision, not just for Bermuda's children today, but for honouring the past and, importantly, for our future generations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the decision to have parish primary schools was solely based on the best possible sites currently being used within each parish. This was a process that was fair, equitable, transparent and robust. As a result of this process, the following sites are being redeveloped as parish primary schools:

- St. George's—East End Primary School site;
- Hamilton Parish—Francis Patton Primary School site;
- Smith's Parish—Harrington Sound Primary School site;
- Devonshire Parish—Elliot Primary School site;
- Pembroke Parish—Victor Scott Primary School site, and West Pembroke Primary School site;
- Paget Parish—Paget Primary School site;
- Warwick Parish—Purvis Primary School site;
- Southampton Parish—Dalton E. Tucker School site; and finally,
- Sandys Parish—Somerset Primary School site.

In addition to the aforementioned, the Prospect Primary School site will be repurposed as an exceptionalities signature school. As a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, schools not named above will eventually be discontinued to be used as primary schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be crystal clear, I want to assure parents, educators and alumni that the decisions on parish primary schools will not have an immediate effect. There will be no closures of any primary schools this school year or the next school year. The eventual discontinuing use of any schools will be phased in over a period of no less than five years, starting after the 2022/23 school year, and more specifically between the years 2023 and 2027. In a few months a project and programme management firm will be secured, and a supporting team created to de-

velop a specific plan with timelines for transitioning away from the primary schools that will no longer be used. This will be anchored by a capital works project and finance plan.

These eventual changes will be challenging for many. We are acutely aware of the need to handle student and staff transitions throughout this process with care. We will engage and involve those directly affected and will share regular progress updates and implementation plans throughout the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, decisions like these are not taken lightly and without considerable thought behind them. As previously mentioned, we had a robust and meaningful consultation process in which the public was afforded the opportunity to express their opinions and provide alternatives to the proposals. I am fully aware that today's decisions, while being welcomed by some in our communities, will displease others. I can state with confidence that throughout the consultation the majority of those engaged agreed—agreed and endorsed the direction education reform was headed, but not all agreed with the proposed school sites. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I reiterate that we must always make decisions around school reform with our children's best interests in mind. This must and always should be our guiding principle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this process has been hard for some communities—that is, the parishes with multiple schools. While for others it has not—the parishes with one primary school. However, from St. George's to Sandys, we are asking our entire country to put the needs of our children first. Some communities will see neighbourhood schools that have stood for generations eventually discontinued to be used, and that pain is not lost on me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been open and transparent to everyone who has called, WhatsApp'd, emailed or spoken to me face to face that our decisions have to be based on what is best for our children and free from political pressures. I realise having this approach has not been received with open arms in our community. There is no secret that there have been some in the Sandys community who have been quite vocal in their opposition to the proposal that had the current Somerset Primary/Lagoon Pre-School site as the best site in Sandys to be redeveloped.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by way of some explanation, the West End Primary School has a very powerful 150-year history, and I am ever grateful for the numerous documents that I have received detailing that rich and powerful history. A history that has unfortunately been rooted in racial discrimination that has seen one school favoured over another in the past based on reasons of race. While this is a critical legacy that must be recognised, as I have mentioned on many occasions, our process focused on the sites of current schools and which are best suited for redevelopment for our children.

I have and I am sure my fellow MPs have already been inundated with messages from members of the public once the announcement that the decision would be made public on Thursday evening went live. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party was borne out of the auspices of fighting the intolerable legacy of discrimination to ensure all Bermudians are treated fairly and equal, as well as given opportunities to succeed regardless of the colour of their skin.

Despite many of us in the Progressive Labour Party sharing and being subject to the same history and legacy, we have decided that this decision must be de-politicised. This does not mean dismissing the past; it is about privileging Bermuda's children's future. I draw colleagues' attention to the law of origin which states that a school must be student-centred. This is a simple yet all-encompassing fact inherent in the reason for the creation and existence of schools, and therefore inherent in the school's work. We must always follow that one guiding principle when it comes to education, which is always do what is best for our children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, throughout the consultation process, I have personally been moved by the level of passion and reverence our communities have shown for the schools within their parish. In Sandys especially I have been reminded of the disgusting history of racism and segregation forced on our people that has led to unhealed trauma and pain that exists today. It is a shameful past that still lives within a certain segment of that community. However, as unsightly as it is, it is a rich history that we must honour in a meaningful way.

On the other hand, there is a segment of the same community that is fully behind the proposal, as they see this as a means to finally achieve the equitable and fair system our forefathers fought for. These are real feelings felt by all and are not lost on me as the Minister of Education. I fully understand the resulting huge burden of making a decision that places our children's best possible chance to succeed before political pressures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to, we must and we will honour the legacy, history and culture of our schools, specifically our schools that provided our Black children with opportunities when the system of the day refused to do so. To this end, we recognise and celebrate our history and will create a Historical Legacy Committee. The idea of this committee is to determine the best way to document, record and share this rich history. Not only to preserve it for future generations but to help communities understand and cope with the intergenerational trauma and pain that still exists today within our community as a result. Work towards the Historical Legacy [Committee] has already begun and further updates will be provided in due course.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first step is to create a national framework within which ideas and proposals from members of our community can be developed, implemented, and shared with schools and the community. Some examples as suggested from the consultation process may include the following:

- digitised oral histories;
- published written histories of primary schools;
- visual historical timelines;
- homecoming celebrations;
- permanent historical exhibits in parish primary schools;
- the potential renaming of some parish primary schools; and
- the rewriting of curriculum to include school and educational history.

I have heard and I deeply understand the prospect of discontinuing the use of some schools, including those with rich histories and legacies. This is a very difficult and painful process for many community elders, alumni, parents and students; and I acknowledge that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am, however, heartened by the consistent thread throughout all of the information provided on the importance of history and legacy. It comes back to the guiding principle that all children should have an equitable, high-quality and world-class education. History teaches us many lessons, and that we need to do better for each and every one of our children is one [lesson] that we have learned and, as a result of this process, [one that] we are working to realise. Today we stand at the cusp of a life-altering decision for our children, a decision that will chart the next chapter in the history of public education in Bermuda for generations to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not simply deciding to discontinue using schools because it is something to do. We are opening new schools on sites that have been judged to be the best possible sites per parish. While we refer to these sites by the names of the schools that currently occupy that space, there is no reason why renaming schools to reflect the progress and growth we as a country have made over the last 50-plus years should not be considered. In fact, in some cases this should be considered mandatory.

Our history in Bermuda, especially in education, has been filled with examples of deliberate and purposeful exclusion of certain segments of society, mostly Black children, to our country's detriment. We will start the process of writing a new chapter and creating new memories for our children and future generations to look back upon fondly. A future in which [all children] regardless of who they are, are able to best succeed. Time will heal all wounds, but only if we allow them to be healed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the year 2021, in a nation as proud as ours, in an Island as small as ours, with so many assets in human capital, with the political will of the Government, and holding our aspirations

for young people close to our hearts, I ask Bermuda, Why shouldn't each and every child in Bermuda receive a world-class education? When it comes to education, leadership is not about the next election; it is about the next generation. It is time for us to walk the walk and not just talk the talk about education reform.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Before I get to the next speaker, we have not seen anybody indicating that they want to ask questions at this point. So I am just putting that out there.

The next Statement is from the Minister of Transport. Minister Scott, you have the floor.

SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the 7th of May 2021, I advised this Honourable House of the payments being made as set out in the project agreement between Skyport and the Bermuda Airport Authority. I wish to provide the House with an update on the latest MRG [minimum revenue guarantee] payment made to Skyport earlier this week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on July 9 Skyport provided the Airport Authority with a formal notice of the shortfall between the actual airport regulated revenues collected for the period from the 1st of April to the 30th of June 2021, and the [guaranteed minimum regulated revenue](#) for the same period, which was an amount totalling \$7,579,778.10.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this year I advised the House that the project agreement contains a predetermined payment schedule of the MRG amounts for each calendar quarter of the 30-year contract. The Government has honoured all of its obligations in this regard, including making this latest MRG payment of \$7,579,778.10 to Skyport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to date we have made four MRG payments to Skyport totalling \$32,772,548.48. We received a contractual reimbursement at the end of 2020 in the sum of \$4,195,088.04, and therefore to date we have made net MRG payments to Skyport totalling \$28,577,460.44. We expect to make additional MRG payments in 2021; however, we do not have estimated amounts at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bermuda Airport Authority continues to do an excellent job in managing this complex matter as part of its oversight responsibilities. The Bermuda Airport Authority has met, and continues to meet, all of its contractual obligations relating to the MRG payments.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister Scott.

The next Ministerial Statement is from the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors. The Honourable Minister Tinee Furbert, you have the floor. Ms. Furbert.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS PROJECTS

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House on the important project work that is being undertaken by the [Ministry of Social Development and Seniors](#).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will provide updates on the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD] to Bermuda, the Children's Commission, litigation guardians, independent living, a Seniors Strategy, assisting the homeless and our engaging with the third sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Honourable House will recall that the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors was created on the 9th of October 2020. The Ministry comprises the Department of Child and Family Services, Ageing and Disability Services, and the K. Margaret Carter Centre, and also has responsibility for the Human Rights Commission and charities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2020 Throne Speech stated that this Government would seek the extension to Bermuda of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, reaffirming that all persons, irrespective of their type of disability, must enjoy fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to inform that technical officers have conducted a thorough review of the necessary articles of the convention to determine Bermuda's current compliance and what is required to meet full compliance. It should be noted that compliance is Island-wide and not limited to government departments and services. The good news is that Bermuda is compliant in many areas, but there is still much work to be done. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will provide further updates as this initiative progresses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2020 Throne Speech also advised that this Government would replace the Child Care Placement Board with a Children's Commission whose remit will be to advocate for the children in care, promoting best-practice policy, programmes and service responses to meet their needs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to inform that we have conducted a review of the role of Children's Commissions in other jurisdictions and have also reached out to key stakeholders in Bermuda for their views on the proposed Children's Commission which I am currently considering. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I plan

to bring legislation forward this year to give effect to the Children's Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in tandem with this work, we are collaborating with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and have engaged consultants to conduct a review of the litigation guardian and counsel services provided for under the Children Act 1998, as well as training. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to assist us in reviewing the litigation guardian service and any improvements that can be made, two highly experienced court professionals will be working with us over the next nine months. They will be supporting Bermuda to determine the model that works for us, taking into account the experiences of other jurisdictions. Their role is supportive and advisory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are currently meeting with key stakeholders in Bermuda about how the litigation guardian services can be—

[No audio]

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —litigation guardian service. The training will be open to all professionals including the litigation guardians themselves (of course), litigation counsel, members of the judiciary and social workers. This is not an exclusive list, and there are some key individuals who will also benefit from being involved in this programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2020 Throne Speech also stated that this Government would fill the void that exists when young people “age out” of government care. The Government will establish independent living coordinators who will devise individual plans for our young people coming out of care, to provide affordable housing options, post-secondary education and career advice, as well as access to physical and mental health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at age 18 children in care of the director, most of whom have spent the majority of their childhood with the Department of Child and Family Services [DCSF], are now expected to shift from being dependent on support from the department to young adults dependent on themselves, virtually overnight. Some have little to no support from their family. It is important that the Department of Child and Family Services continue to provide support services needed if agreed to [in order] to prevent adverse outcomes such as early parenthood, involvement with the criminal justice system, poverty, homelessness and dependence on financial assistance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to reduce the barriers for successful transition to adulthood and invest in the success of these young people, the Department of Child and Family Services has developed an Independent Living Programme. This programme is designed specifically for children ageing out of [their] care who at 18 do not have an identified transi-

tion plan. Consideration will be given to those children who were involved with DCFS and have aged out within the previous 18 months, based on an established criterion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Independent Living Programme will provide stable housing, and intensive support and guidance to assist these young persons in developing the life skills necessary to become successful and productive citizens. Programme deliverables will ensure the young person has stable housing and support in educational and vocational training, and attains money management skills. [The programme will also] support the young person in building and maintaining healthy relationships and lifelong connections with caring adults, establish connections to medical and social/emotional resources and assist the young person in securing and maintaining employment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, collaboration will take place with Workforce Development to have the Independent Living Programme participants engage with career development officers as a mandatory requirement for employment readiness via their personal employment plan. This will also be a requirement for financial assistance eligibility under the new financial assistance reform.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Department of Child and Family Services is working with the Ministry of Public Works to identify a physical location for the male participants of the Independent Living Programme. The amount of \$500,000 has been allocated in this financial year for the property. [Teen] Haven is the identified residential location for the female programme participants. Under a memorandum of understanding, the upper level of its bay view property will be dedicated for use by the Independent Living Programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Independent Living Programme will be operational 24 hours [a day]. There will be professional staff (independent living coordinators) and support staff engaged to implement the programme. Staff will come on board trained in working with young persons with complex needs and will be equipped to deliver programming in accordance with best-practice standards on youth independent living services. Having staff who fully understand trauma-informed strength-based service delivery and the performance quality improvement process will ensure a seamless and successful implementation of a quality programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the original timeline for this programme was scheduled for April 1, 2021, with an official launch/operational date of [June] 2021. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions, the timeline for the launch has been pushed back, and the revised launch date is for September 2021.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry is also developing a National Seniors Strategy to meet the

needs of the growing senior population in Bermuda to enable Bermudians to age well with dignity and respect. I look forward to bringing the strategy to this Honourable House in due course.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the most vulnerable groups in our community are the homeless, or those who are unsheltered. These individuals or families lack stable and appropriate housing. The economic effects of COVID-19 have added to the numbers of the unsheltered, who were particularly challenged during the recent shelter-in-place phases.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government is cognisant of the challenges of the unsheltered and is helping. This includes the initiatives being managed by my colleague, the Honourable David Burch, Minister of Public Works, under the short-term economic stimulus package. Some \$1,600,000 in Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] projects will produce 17 residential units. This is adding much-needed units to the housing stock of the BHC, who provide a significant service to those needing affordable housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry is this year providing some \$550,000 in direct grant funds to support the operations at the emergency shelter on North Street for the unsheltered. My honourable colleague is replacing the emergency housing shelter on North Street with a new facility this year which will provide a modern and more suitable facility to those most in need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Ministry provides a further \$2,050,000 in grants to assist with housing for seniors and other vulnerable groups. This, combined with the work and funds provided by other entities within government, including Financial Assistance, ensures that those most in need are helped and will continue to be helped. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue to fine-tune our response to assisting the unsheltered and collaborate with the third sector to ensure that resources are directed to those who are most in need.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank those organisations in the third sector who have worked so hard to provide assistance to the most vulnerable in our community during this very challenging time. I have had regular meetings with them as we moved through each phase of the re-opening of Bermuda, to get updates on the challenges that their clients and their organisations were facing. Their selfless work to help Bermudians in need is heartwarming, and I encourage my fellow Bermudians, if you cannot give financial support to these entities, please give of your time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will continue to collaborate with the third sector groups to ensure that this Government is fully aware of the challenges faced by the third sector and their clients.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister Furbert. That is the end of the Ministerial Statements.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Deputy Speaker: There are no reports of committees.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Deputy Speaker: This is the Question Period, and it lasts for 60 minutes. The first question is to the Honourable Minister Renee Ming. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question was:

QUESTION: TOTAL COST TO GOVERNMENT FOR QUARANTINE SITES

[This Question was redirected to the Ministry of National Security on 16 July 2021]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House of the total monthly cost to the Government for all of the quarantine sites from inception of the programme to July 10, 2021?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to provide that amount. The weekend is July 11, so these values actually are at July 11. It is based on invoices received, and it would be \$119,034.72.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Simons, do you have any further questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: You are quite welcome.

The Deputy Speaker: So far we have two [Members] who would like to ask questions.

The Honourable Member Neville Tyrrell would like to ask a question of the Minister Scott.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sent you questions, too.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, my apologies.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I sent you a number of them.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I do not see them, but that is no problem.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: They are in your in box.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Mr. Simons.
Hold off, Mr. Tyrrell.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I have questions for the Minister of Works on the Tynes Bay plant.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. That is the first Statement?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is correct.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 1: TYNES BAY PLANT CRITICAL STATUS REPORT

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: It states that most of the power is sold over the BELCO power grid. Can the Minister confirm the total revenues realised from BELCO from the sale of the energy for the past two fiscal years?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that question is actually something that was not listed within the Statement and that will actually require some research.

I do believe, following the rules of the House, questions should pertain to everything that is in the Statement, not requiring me to actually go and actually dig up that information like that. But I can endeavour to get that information to that Member from the Ministry of Works.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions, Mr. Simons?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, a second question. It says, "This plan will see Tynes Bay repurposed as a renewable energy hub—"

The Deputy Speaker: What page are you reading from, Member Simons?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Page 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Page 2?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. It says, "This plan will see Tynes Bay repurposed as a renewable energy hub for waste and water utility . . ." Will this have an impact on the amount of energy sold to BELCO? That is a supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am just waiting for technical staff. Actually, the response here to the question, I guess it is responsive to the question that was first asked. A typical sale is 180 kWh per month. Whether the repurposing of the plant will have an effect on that is going to be something that I will have to get back to the Member on. I do apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I apologise to the Member. I was asked to read this only because the substantive Minister is having technical difficulties, while he is travelling, to be online.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION 2: TYNES BAY PLANT CRITICAL STATUS REPORT

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And then the second question that I have on page 4. "If not for Tynes Bay, that same garbage would find itself either destroying what is left of Pembroke Marsh . . ." Can the Minister give an undertaking that he would share with this House the plans that they have for Pembroke Marsh going forward?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I can definitely take that undertaking on and make sure the technical officers have that question. And we can provide some clarity around that.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you very much.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: [Are there] any further questions on the Tynes Bay [Plant] Critical Status Report?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Richardson, continue.

QUESTION 1: TYNES BAY PLANT CRITICAL STATUS REPORT

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you. I thank the Honourable Minister.

In his Statement or in the substantive Minister's Statement, he said that some components were either deficient or not functioning. And then later on it

said in the Statement that we are going into a full refurbishment of the Tynes Bay facility.

My question to the Minister would be, How long will the refurbishment take?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question, Honourable Member. I do want to say I think the Statement mentioned around five years. But I am waiting for our technical officers to get that particular answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions, MP Richardson?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, sir, a supplemental on that one.

Would the Honourable Minister be able to speak to the specific work that is going to take place at the site? And obviously, I am mindful that this may have to be looked up.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. Thank you for that question.

Again I can undertake to get [that information]. The Statement did not [mention] exactly what works will be undertaken. I do know from actually being a Cabinet Minister and listening that there is going to be a full refurbishment. When [I] say “full refurbishment and rebuild,” that is exactly what it sounds like, a virtually complete rebuild. And if we are talking about the entire plant, I was correct in saying that the estimate is around five years for a complete rebuild of the entire plant.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions on this Statement?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Second question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue.

QUESTION 2: TYNES BAY PLANT CRITICAL STATUS REPORT

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The Minister said there are some 200 to 300 tons of trash processed at the facility. What are the plans going forward for all of that waste?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. Thank you, Member.

The plan for that is to continue to have the plant operate as it has been operating, with fingers crossed that we do not have any catastrophic things that force the plant to not be able to operate. But as it is standing now, it is operating with the fixes that have

been put in place. But we do recognise that those are not a sustainable model. So we will continue to utilise it as it is while moving forward [as] the new plant continues.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And supplemental, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: What correspondence or communication will go out to the public in relation to services at Tynes Bay, alterations to services at the Tynes Bay if a person wants to take trash or use any of those facilities? Where can they look up what they can and cannot do, or are we anticipating a full service going forward?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: All government announcements are issued by . . . we now have WhatsApp. We have the Tree Frog. We have the website. We have direct mailings. I am sure you have received direct mailings about what is going on at trash collection and recycling. There are numerous ways in which the public will be kept abreast, also including social media and traditional media.

The Government has numerous ways that the public will be kept abreast of everything that is going on so they can know well in advance where we are and what restrictions there might be coming if those restrictions have to be put in place.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister. Those are all of my questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Do any further Members have questions for the Minister on that Statement?

Okay. The next questions we have are for the Minister of Education on primary schools.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have a question.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Honourable Member.

QUESTION 1: PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION DECISION

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: On page 2, the Minister indicated that “We used well-thought-out and defined criteria that identified the best existing school site in each parish . . .” My question is for the edification of the community: Can the Minister succinctly define what criteria were used in identifying those schools that will be used going forward?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that question.

As I just talked about in the Statement, the criteria are in the public domain. It was part of the consultation documents. So I could say that the question you have asked, sir, has been in the public domain since December 2020. There are clearly defined 19 attributes. I actually do not have all 19 of them in front of me. But there were 19 clearly defined attributes that were taken into account when we looked at each site. Each site was judged by the same criteria. And then parishes that had multiple schools were then compared . . . the sites within those parishes were compared against each other. And the sites that had the highest score were the ones chosen.

But again, the consultation document can be located on the Education Ministry's website, www.moed.bm. It is approximately about 80 pages long. And I want to say just over 20 pages of that talk about what the criterion are and lists the actual score that each site got. So it is extremely transparent. All data and documentation are there for you to see. As we would say, it is already in the public domain. But if [he wishes] that number, I could send it to him directly, or he could go to the website and download it and look at it himself.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions on that Statement?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, I do.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a supplementary to that question.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Ms. Jackson, MP.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Good morning. And good morning, Minister.

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

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: My question is, given the criteria in the public domain I would also like to ask, What is the Minister's criteria or response to graduates and parents of high-performing schools that are now being closed?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I think that this was a question that came up during the consultation process. As I said, the consultation process went from December to now. Again, the answer to that question is within the various documents that were displayed, because it is one thing that we knew was going to be asked and so we ensured that we talked about it.

We will say that high-performance schools are not an indication of whether the site itself is suitable for redevelopment. High-performance schools are what we would consider an intangible thing that is very difficult to measure. Because it does not take into account the facilities; it does not take into account services that are required for the individual children; it does not take into account equitable services being supplied throughout the system. So there are lots of different intangibles that go into [it] when you start talking about high-performance schools.

So what we are assured of is that when we provide the necessary services and all of our schools are able to stand up and say that they have all of the tools that are required for all of those students to succeed no matter where those children come from, how much money their parents have or do not have, or what difficulties or specialties that they bring to the table, we will be able to make sure that they have everything that they need.

So we feel, and the documentation and the data that we collected certainly do support, that moving to parish primary schools will provide all of our children [an opportunity] to succeed and [will] do away with the system of having some schools that seemingly succeed and others that do not.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

QUESTION 2: PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION DECISION

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have another question.

On page 3 of the Statement, the Minister indicated that he will be engaging a "project and programme management firm" to deliver and manage the transition.

My question is, How much has the Government budgeted for this management firm's engagement over the number of years for the transition?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: That is a good question. I do not have the exact figures, but that is something that was budgeted in this year's budget for that engagement. So it is a question that I can endeavour to get back to the Member with, the exact number that was budgeted for this fiscal year for that. But it is something that has been budgeted for.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will this engagement be put out to open tender or will it be exempt?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: This engagement, as a matter of fact, Honourable Member, we are in the process of discussing. We have been discussing it for the last month and a half with the Ministry of Works, which of course covers lands and buildings, which owns all of the school buildings, and OPMP [Office of Project Management and Procurement]. We have been in discussions on how the RFP [request for proposal] for that process will work. The target date is September. We will be releasing an RFP for bids for that work.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is all I have. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Any further questions on that?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I still have a question for the Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Ms. Jackson. Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

Minister, just getting back to the criteria again, there was much said about the physical plant. But again, I am curious if the Minister might shed some light on what is being done to assess and adopt and save the quality teaching that has occurred within high-performing schools that are now closing? What is being done to save that information, to protect those elements within the school system that are working really well from a performance perspective so that those high-performance behaviours are transferred into this reformed physical plant that you mentioned?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And I thank you, Member, for that question.

First, I want to correct a misnomer where you say "physical plant." We looked at the physical sites to see if the sites could be redeveloped. I know it is a popular thing that the RG [*Royal Gazette*] keeps mentioning that we have looked at physical buildings to see what buildings can be redeveloped. It is not. We have looked at the actual site to see if the site can support the redevelopment of the schools of the future. I just want to take that time to clarify that.

In terms of what is working and what is not working within our system, as you would well know as I have done a briefing with you, education reform does not involve just the creation of physical buildings that will fit 21st century learning. It also has to undertake the Learning First programme, a programme that has been put in place to examine how teaching is done, how learning is done and what we need to do in terms of retooling, retraining and helping our teachers become better teachers and what is it they do, as well as

revamping our curriculum so that it will become more relevant for the students whom we do have.

The second part of that, as you would know as well, is the fading-out of the middle school system and reverting back to a two-tiered system. The work of that was done earlier this year when we passed the Education Amendment Act, which paved the way for that. And as has been put in the public domain, we will have the first of our two signature schools opening in the 2022 school year, and that is at the CedarBridge Academy and the Berkeley Institute.

The third part, which again the Member is aware of, is the creation of the Education Authority. The purpose of the Education Authority is to look at how schools operate and the governance around how schools operate, and to produce more accountability within our education system. The Education Authority team has been busy interviewing and conducting question-and-answer sessions with all of our schools and our teachers and our principals, as well as our aided schools (because the school that you are referring to is an aided school) to discuss how they operate. What is it that they do? So we can incorporate pluses, we can incorporate the things that are being done well. We can look at the things that are not being done well and how we can improve them and produce a system that has the governance structure in place that produces children, produces the students whom we need for Bermuda to succeed.

So with all of that in mind, and combined, all three of those strands will in fact take a system that is disjointed, a system that is inequitable and a system that does not provide our children with the necessary tools to succeed at all times [and change it] into a system that does exactly what we want it to do. And that is to give every single child in Bermuda access to a world-quality education and the opportunity to be successful.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary, Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: When talking about the school sites, Minister, I was just curious. You know, we are talking about plans for the teachers and students and the like. What about the actual school sites themselves that will be [INAUDIBLE]? Are there any plans that have been put in place for these particular buildings, knowing that maintenance is difficult to keep up for Public Works? Has there been any talk about what to do with these sites?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Can you clarify your question, Member?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Sure.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Are you referring to sites that will be eventually discontinued or sites that—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: That is correct. That is correct, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. Thank you. Thank you. That is a topical question.

In terms of sites that will be discontinued, as I mentioned in the Statement, discontinuing will not start to be phased in for several years from now. And at that point, it will not be that all schools will cease to exist and will move to another. There will be an eventual movement. So it is something that will have to be planned while we talk about the project and programme management. This is something that will have to be planned and phased in over several years.

However, during the consultation process there have been suggestions on what could happen with school sites that will eventually be discontinued, such things as youth centres, day care centres. Some people even suggested government offices. When we talk about our historical legacy, our preservation committee, there is an idea of turning one of them into a museum of some sort, of education. So there are a multitude of ideas, and there are also people who have come out of the woodwork to say, *Hey, I have a plan. If you are not going to use this school, can I utilize this school for something?*

So that is still all in its very formative stages now. But [you] can rest assured that the public will be kept engaged. Of course, the Ministry of Works will have to be engaged because school buildings fall under them as well. But there will be robust plans as we move along to discuss what could be happening with the buildings that are no longer used. I think, also critically, especially in some areas public engagement will have to be part, a very critical part of that engagement as well to determine what happens to these schools, some of them which have been community school buildings for generations within their communities.

So to answer your question succinctly, there have been a lot of ideas that have been put out. We are not quite at that space yet. But the ideas are being collated and will definitely come into play. And the public will know about them so that they can give their input as well.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Deputy Speaker, second supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue. Yes.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. The year 2023 will be here relatively quickly. It is not too far off, quite frankly, as we head to the other half of 2021. I was hoping that maybe (and I am hoping that you are thinking on these lines as well) this might be a revenue opportunity also for government knowing that potentially we could sell off some of these buildings. Renting always is a difficult thing.

But I do believe and hope that you might be looking at that. Would you consider that as well, the sale of these properties?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: At this point there is no idea that is off the table. As I said there are people who have come out of the woodwork who have come and said, *Hey, I'm looking for a property. I'm looking to run something there. This would be a perfect opportunity for me to get it.* So there have been people who have come and expressed various ideas. But at this point it is difficult to put the cart before the horse here.

When it comes to education, we have always tended to make bold statements without the data, without the patience to back it up. This time we are trying to do things completely differently and walk before we run when it comes to education reform.

As you heard me say in the Statement, first and foremost on our minds is what is best for the children. Once that is settled and that is answered and we move forward with that, then we can take on the rest of it. Although I do recognise that some of this stuff does have to be done simultaneously, rest assured there is nothing that is off the table when it comes to what needs to be done in order to ensure that our children get the best that we have to offer.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Minister, you said that there is nothing that is off the table. But presumably, after all of this time and consultation and your decision to close nine schools, you must have some plan on the table for what you will do with the closed school sites.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I believe I just answered that question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: You didn't.

I just asked you if you have a plan that is *on* the table. You have just said that nothing is *off* the table. Is there a plan on the table?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I said I believe I answered that question. The question prior to yours was, Do we have any idea of what is going to happen with the schools? And I extensively answered the question that there have been lots of suggestions. There have been things . . . and I even mentioned some of the suggestions that have come from the consultation process. I also reiterated that we are in the process of making the decisions to move forward. Now that we know what the decision is, we can start now looking at how that decision can be effected. As we said, after the 2022/23 school year is when we can start. And we can then start talking about the suggestions that have come.

You are asking me, *Is there anything on the table?* So, since you have asked, I will reiterate what I said earlier. We have had suggestions of using—

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, Minister, Minister. There is no need to repeat.

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

The Deputy Speaker: You have adequately answered the question.

Any further questions?

No further questions? The next questions I have are for the Minister of Transport, from the Honourable Member Scott Pearman to Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is supposed to be the Minister of Finance.

[Crosstalk]

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you, Minister of Transport. Thank you for your Statement to the House this morning on the minimum revenue guarantee numbers for the quarter and Skyport.

Minister, it is probably not a surprise, these numbers. But I would ask you to indicate to the House where the situation stands now with the diminished airlift to Canada and the stunted airlift to the United States. How and when do you see those changing? Thank you.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: As of right now the airlift to Canada will be returning, as Air Canada has indicated that they are going to be putting their flights to [and from] Canada back on shortly. Also, the airlift to the United States has diminished, but that is also slated to return. But right now it seems as though international contractual travel is operating at about 30 [per cent] to 40 per cent of pre-pandemic numbers and is not antic-

ipated, meaning projected by IATA (which is the International Air Transport Association), to return to pre-COVID-19 numbers until 2024.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Minister, in terms of the Canadian airlift, you have indicated that it is likely to return. Can you give us some sort of rough estimate on the fine print?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: As of right now, the communications that we have had is that it should be reinstated prior to school going back in September.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

In terms of the stunted aircraft lift to the United States, again are you able to give us some sort of indication on the timeframe as to when we will see that returning to airlift capacity as opposed to numbers on the plane?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: We are unable to do that at this time. Once again, the best that we have is the IATA projections, which would say that international commercial air travel will return to pre-COVID-19 numbers in 2024.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Second question?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, IATA has indicated that we will be returning to pre-COVID-19 numbers in 2024 as you stated. Others have indicated that we might be closer to normalcy levels, or at least Bermuda normalcy levels, in 2022. Do you agree with that or disagree with that? Is that too ambitious? Is that too negative? Do you have any sense of that which you can share with the House?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I would be more inclined to lean and rely on the IATA numbers, as IATA is one of

the more trusted agencies and internationally recognised agencies. When it comes to Bermuda's numbers, there are plans in place. And one way that we would be able to get back to pre-COVID-19 numbers prior to that would be based off of the Bermuda Government or the Ministry being able to successfully execute our air service development policy.

That policy is what you have already seen go in place now, which is based off of the locally inspired routes, for example, the nonstop to the Azores route, which has been successful and has been extended past its original date. But we are also looking at basing it on the makeup of the community as a whole. So the Ministry is now focusing in on the Caribbean, and we believe that with our focusing in on the Caribbean, that will help us get flights back on track sooner.

But I do want to state that we are looking at other destinations outside of the Caribbean that will help us get back on track. But that is why it is very important for our air service development to get back up and running to try to get us back on track prior to or sooner than 2024.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.
Just in terms of the returns to normalcy and the UK route, I understand that there are some positive signs in recent days and weeks in relation to the UK route. Are you able to give the House any update on that position?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. British Airways has indicated that they are going to increase their frequency, which is good. But keep in mind that although they are increasing their frequency it does not mean that they are matching the pre-COVID-19 frequency that they had before. So that is what we have to maintain where, yes, you do see that we have full flights coming in from the United States. But the United States air carriers are using smaller aircraft which carry fewer passengers. So we still do not have the same frequency, nor do we have the same seat availability, as we did pre-COVID-19.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, second and final supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Thank you for the clarity of that answer.

Again, still on trying to get the return to normalcy here, could you share the same information in respect of Miami and New York, and in particular the American Airlines situation?

Thank you.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Were you asking about Miami, the Miami route?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Miami and New York, and in particular the American Airlines situation. Thank you.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: So right now American Airlines is doing very well out of Charlotte. They are slowly re-introducing the Miami run. We will see that they [operate] on Saturdays, which means once a week out of Miami. When it comes to going out of New York, it goes back to what I mentioned before. The US international travel market is not where it used to be, and the airlines do not believe that they can support multiple air carriers out of JFK as they did pre-pandemic.

And so once again that is where Bermuda has to start to take the bull by the horns and create an air service development strategy that is strategic, long-term, consistent and reliable, but also nimble when it needs to be.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member Tyrrell, Honourable Member Tyrrell, you had questions for the Transport Minister?

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much. Good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question centres around the minimum revenue guarantee [MRG]. And I would like to ask the Minister, for the benefit of the listening public, What is his Ministry doing to reduce or stop these MRG payments?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Member, for the question.

The main thing that we are doing to stop the MRG payments, as I mentioned earlier, is with our air service development strategy. But I think it would be helpful for the House to know that the MRG is based off of departures, not necessarily arrivals. So that is why the Ministry is looking to go to locally based and locally inspired routes, i.e., Azores, Caribbean. And we are also looking at West Africa, which is part of the African Diaspora Trail, and points in Western Canada right now, which will provide connectivity onward to

the Philippines and India. So when we put that in place, given that those routes are locally driven, we will have persons who will be departing the Island, but also those persons will be inviting what we call *VFRs* (visiting friends and relatives), who will come in to visit their friends and relatives here in Bermuda because we have made it more convenient for them to get to Bermuda. So, therefore, when they visit, [when their stay is over], then they leave as well.

But also, going to these routes will allow for us to be able to allow every possible demographic—those who currently are unable to travel to the United States, Canada or the UK due to extenuating circumstances. They will be able to travel to the Caribbean and/or West Africa, which increases our departure numbers and helps mitigate our risk against paying the MRG.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions, Mr. Tyrrell?

QUESTION 2: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Second question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I noted in the Statement that we are expecting additional MRG payments in 2021, Minister. How many more payments after 2021 are there likely to be?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I wish I could say that we would have no payments at the end of 2021. But I think that it is safe to say that we will be paying MRGs until 2024, which is when IATA (as I stated earlier) indicates that the international commercial air service will be returning to pre-pandemic numbers. But we also feel as though there is a possibility, based off of how successful our air service development strategy is, that we should be able to, *may* be able to stop having payments prior to that.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions, Mr. Tyrrell?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Minister, is there anything else we can do to avoid these MRG payments?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Contrary to popular belief, even if we were to cancel the agreement today we would still have MRG payments to make, but just to different entities. But what we can do, and what is be-

ing done (I should say), is that the Airport Authority is looking into, researching and doing their due diligence on every possible additional revenue stream.

Right now to give an example so that does not seem too far-fetched is that the Airport Authority is looking at expanding Bermuda's airspace, which means that this would provide us with additional air navigation services, revenues and other things like that. So every time an aircraft flies through that extended airspace, we would be paid by the airlines for that. And we are estimating that at this present time, for the first two weeks of July, we have had close to 800 flights fly through our airspace versus the roughly 40 flights that have actually landed at our airport.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or supplementary, Mr. Tyrrell?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: No. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The next person who wanted to ask questions was Mr. Richardson.

Honourable Member Richardson.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you, but I was not.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

The next questions were to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors, Ms. Furbert. I think—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I have one, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: To whom, Ms. Furbert?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

QUESTION 1: MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS PROJECTS

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.

The Minister on page 1 opens her Statement by saying, "I will provide updates on the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to Bermuda . . .".

Given that in the corporate community there is a lot of emphasis on diversity and ESG [environmental, social and governance] protocols, and as you will know the ESG protocols address social issues which cover employee and diversity [issues], my question to the Minister is this: Has this Minister embarked upon a campaign that will provide employment opportunities and employment support for the visually impaired, hearing impaired and people on the autism spectrum?

Because they are deemed to be, fall in the category as persons with disabilities.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologise. My connection is not too great today, and I did miss some of the content of that question.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, do you want to repeat that, please?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: As you know, in the corporate community a lot . . . do you hear me, Minister?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. As you know, in the corporate community a lot of emphasis has been placed on ESG, which is environmental, social, governance protocols, globally, from an investment point of view. And part of those ESG protocols, they examine social issues, and under the social issues are employee and diversity [issues].

So my question to you is, Has the Government embarked upon a campaign that will provide employment opportunities and employment support for the visually impaired, hearing impaired and people on the autism spectrum? Because they are other disabilities, these people can be functional and should be able to find employment opportunities in our community.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question is one that I do not think would come out of my Ministerial Statement. However, at this present time there is no campaign that has been started in regard to employability for persons with disabilities. However, the transposition table which we have created does seek out a section in regard to employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

So that is actually included in the transposition table. I apologise; I do not have the transposition table in front of me to be able to say exactly what it states. But the UN convention will assess where we are and will make recommendations to us to where we need to get to.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So are we saying that, given the review by the UN for where we stand as a jurisdiction on the disability and compliance to the convention that we will do something to address the hearing and visually [impaired] and autistic spectrum popu-

lations in employment, and we will have a plan for them sometime in the future?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to just speak to the population of autism. We are talking about a whole population of persons with disabilities.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And I said that. I just said visually impaired—I just gave them as examples. Visually impaired, hearing impaired, autism. I go across this whole range of disadvantaged people.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. And currently, if anyone who is experiencing discrimination against any sort of employment sector, [they] should be supported by the Human Rights Commission because they do address issues of discrimination. The other area which does help persons with disabilities is the KMCC (K. Margaret Carter Centre), who also provides a working programme. That does not mean there is not much more—there is more work to be done as far as employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

I am just trying to seek through the transposition table. But I can share this transposition table; that is not an issue. I can do that, where you can take a look.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, any further questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No further questions. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Pearman, do you have a question for the Minister?

QUESTION 1: MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS PROJECTS

Mr. Scott Pearman: I do, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Minister, thank you for your Statement to the House this morning. In respect to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, you said the “technical officers” (this is at the top of page 2 of your Statement) “have conducted a thorough review of the necessary articles of the convention to determine Bermuda’s current compliance and what is required” And you said, “The good news is that Bermuda is compliant in many areas, but there is still much work to be done.”

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Surely.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Does that mean that we are not compliant in certain areas?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, Honourable Member. So with the transposition table, it looks at what areas we are noncompliant in, partially compliant and fully compliant. So there are areas where we are not compliant.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary. Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Minister, you referred to a table which sets out compliance and noncompliance and some compliance. Will you table that document in the House?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I will be definitely giving an update in regard to where we are with the UN convention. Today I spoke of—well, I can actually give you some information. The transposition table is currently with the Attorney General's Chambers for a review. And then it will be extended to Government House, [at which time] we will await feedback from Government House in regard to the convention.

But once we have more details in regard to that, I have no problem with sharing the transposition table. So we are definitely not compliant in some areas, but not just government; it is Island-wide as well.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I understand.
Supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Pending your tabling that document, could you just at a very high level identify the areas of particular concern that you have?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I am sorry. Repeat that, Honourable Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister.
Until we actually see that document, are you able to identify any high-level areas of concern that you have?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Actually, one of those areas is the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector. Another area is social protection programmes to reduce poverty, particularly with women, girls, with disabilities. But in due course I can definitely advise where we are with compliance and noncompliance, or partially compliant.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Second question?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Continue.

QUESTION 2: MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS PROJECTS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Minister, changing topics slightly to the issue of litigation guardians, which you have also dealt with in your Statement at pages 2 and 3, you have indicated in your Statement to the House that you are “collaborating with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and have engaged consultants to conduct a review of the litigation guardian[s]” You then refer in the paragraph thereafter to “two highly experienced court professionals will be working with us over the next nine months.” It is not clear if the consultants are the two highly experienced people you refer to. But my question is this: Who has been engaged and roughly at what cost?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Actually, Honourable Member, I would like to change the expression because we are not *ordering* the Foreign Commonwealth Office. The Foreign Commonwealth Office is collaborating with the Ministry in regard to litigation guardians and counsel. The Foreign Commonwealth Office is actually responsible for the costs associated with the two consultants.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I did quote you as saying “collaborating with,” not “ordering.” But thank you.

A supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Actually, it is the same question. Are you able to identify who has been engaged?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Give me one second, Honourable Member. I have their names in my head, but I definitely do not want to mess them up.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
While you are getting that answer, I am happy to ask my second supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Minister, also still on the same issue, at the top of page 3 of your Statement you refer to the six-month training programme for litigation guardians. And you say it will be open to all. I am just curious whether or not the litigation guardians themselves will

be required to attend this training or whether that is a discretionary option open to them? So if you could answer that and the issue of who the consultants will be, I would be grateful.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Sure. Yes, all who are current litigation guardians will be expected to participate in the training. And we will also open it up to other persons who are interested in litigation guardian training as well.

For the two consultants, it is Anthony Douglas, the ex-Director of Cafcass [Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service]; and Cyrus Larizadah, a QC [Queen's Counsel] from London.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. I am actually familiar with both of them. And thank you for your answer. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Pearman.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions? Because we do not have any, but if it is not . . .

Okay. That is the end of Question Period.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any congratulatory or obits?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Mr. Weeks, continue.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I am trying to get my video up and running, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, sir.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. Can I start while my video is buffering?

The Deputy Speaker: Certainly. Go right ahead.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: All right. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, good morning to you. Good morning to my colleagues and to the listening public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to ask that this House takes part with me in congratulating and recognising my constituent, Ms. Nicole Famous, who celebrates over a decade of the Natural Blessings Always movement on the same day that she celebrates her birthday, which is today. So happy birthday to Nicole! The movement was conceived in 2009 to celebrate the beauty of natural black hair. Ms. Famous wanted to highlight the beauty and diversity of

black hair while celebrating self-love amongst our Black women. The programme was first launched as a small hair show for the community at the St. Paul AME Church Centennial Hall.

The annual expo grew to incorporate charitable and community-giving initiatives. Mr. Deputy Speaker, each year the committee would identify community members who could benefit from the proceeds of the well-attended event. I too was there on a few occasions. They have donated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, BELCO vouchers, grocery vouchers and other vouchers from various vendors across the Island for our seniors in need. This expo has featured tutorials and demonstrations by local hair care professionals, barbers, as well as international leaders in the world of natural hair care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2020 would have marked the 10th Natural Blessings Always hair expo. Of course, COVID-19 pushed this momentous occasion back. But Nicole Famous has announced that the 2021 the Natural Blessings Always Hair Expo will be produced as a broadcast event and will air on Channel 82, the community station, on November 20, 2021. Over the years this organisation has also provided scholarships to students and donations to those in need.

Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ms. Famous has announced the presentation of a book bursary for Selah Ray, a Bermuda College student for 2021. I am proud of the work that my constituent, Ms. Nicole Famous, has put into elevating her community, and I salute her and these contributions to Bermuda!

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Weeks. Any further speakers?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We recognise the Honourable Member, Ms. Lovitta Foggo.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just two congratulatory remarks: Firstly, I would like the House to join me in saying a belated *happy birthday* to one of our former Members, Mr. Arthur Pitcher, who celebrated seven decades very recently. There are some here today who would remember him when he was in the House.

Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another former member of the House, but part of the legislative staff, I would like us to congratulate Mr. Dominique Johns, who not only a few years back received his undergraduate degree, Bachelor of Arts Degree in Management, but just recently graduated with his Master of Science degree in International Business. I highlight that because Dominique Johns—and many of us remember him because he worked in the House

of Assembly—is one of Bermuda’s success stories. In spite of not having any assistance (or enough) because he was an orphaned child for quite some time and an adult orphan, he decided that he wanted to serve Bermuda in a different capacity. And he went back to school, starting at Bermuda College, did extremely well and then from there, because of his grades, was able to secure a scholarship from the school he attended, Dalhousie University, on a partial scholarship from them.

He is one of those Bermudians who had no finances, I guess, if you will, to rely on. Workforce Development gave him a Mature Student Award; I think it was for \$15,000. So he was the successful applicant of that award, I believe, under us. Then from there, when he pursued his master’s degree, again Workforce Development, wanting to ensure because the landscape has changed for those persons who need assistance—wanting to ensure that this young man did realise success, they introduced giving awards to one or two graduate students. And he was the recipient, I believe, of a \$5,000 award, which allowed him, though he had to work very hard in between, to realise his Master of Science degree.

So, he is a shining example of what Government has done over the years to help its people realise their dreams so that they can come back and be successful members of our society and give back to Bermuda.

So, I wanted to—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, your three minutes are up.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you. Okay. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, D. P. Lister III, Honourable Member.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good morning to the listening audience and to my fellow colleagues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to send some congratulatory remarks in this House to one other who is absent today, whose seat you are taking, the Speaker, Mr. Lister, the Speaker, MP Lister. He and my mother actually celebrate 40 years of marriage today. So I would like to send congratulations to them on their 40 years.

The Deputy Speaker: Associate the whole House with that.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will do.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in saying that, I would be remiss and I probably would not get dinner this evening—

The Deputy Speaker: Right.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —as on Tuesday, July 20, my wife and I celebrate our first year of marriage. So I would like again for the House to send congratulations to my wife and me.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to add to the Speaker of the House, those 40 years, I can only wish them many more years of marriage and only wish that my wife and I can enjoy a marriage as long as they have. So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Yes. Thank you, D. P. Lister III.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Ms. Furbert.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would like to also send condolences to the family of the Outerbridges through Harlem Heights. I believe they had a loss of Ms. Yvonne Outerbridge, who is the mother of Ashton and Jeanne. And to the whole Harlem Heights family, I just want this House to send condolences to that family.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just wanting to highlight some Special Olympians, give some congratulations to some Special Olympians whom we have. They are Bridgette Marshall, who plays tennis; Eden Woollery, who is an equestrian; Micah Lambert, who is a tennis player; Danielle Gibbons, she is the Athlete Leader; and Wayne Smith, who is a bowler. All of these athletes recently qualified to represent Bermuda in the 2022 USA Summer Games in Orlando, Florida.

So, I wanted to send special congratulations out to our Special Olympian team members.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me associate myself with the remarks concerning Ms. Yvonne Outerbridge of Harlem Heights. Ms. Outerbridge was a lifelong member at St. John’s AME Church, and she will be sorely missed by the church family.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Swan, Honourable Member Swan, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you for that. I am glad I was able to get in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to have a letter of thank-you and congratulations if possible sent to Nicholas and Alexandra Polvino. [PHONETIC] I had the honour of meeting them at Port Royal Golf Course this week. They are celebrating their marriage in Bermuda, it being delayed because of COVID-19. But they had planned to be here, and they made it to Bermuda. They enjoy golf, so he was able to play one round. And I invited them to come back and play golf with me because he was doing the right thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and spending the rest of the vacation or honeymoon with his wife.

But they are an example of a young couple starting off their lives as husband and wife in Bermuda. And I thanked them, and I wished them well, and I wished them many years of happiness. And may Bermuda be a part of not only their remembrance of their marriage, but that their future family could enjoy our lovely Island as many have in the past, doing it exactly that way.

So I wanted to mention their marriage during these difficult times that we have all encountered and wish them well from the Parliament to the Polvinos [PHONETIC] from New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Their families are very much a part of our family now.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Member, I trust you will provide the information, of address and proper name spelling, to the Clerk.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I will do that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.
Any further speakers?
There appear to be none at this point.
No further speakers on congrats and obits?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr. Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. Sorry. My bandwidth is a little [erratic]. My video would keep cutting out.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I just wanted to give condolences to the whole of Devonshire because we lost one of our friends, Mr. Kirby Grant, commonly known as "Gaffer." He was born and raised in Loyal Hill, attended Elliot, lived on Hermitage Road and Devon Spring Lane.

An Hon. Member: Associate me, please.

Mr. Christopher Famous: He was a community giant. Unfortunately, he was in an accident last year—

An Hon. Member: I would like to be associated.

Another Hon. Member: Associate, please.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —and passed away earlier this week. He is survived by many children, many family members and the entire community.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. MP Tyrrell would like to be associated with those remarks.

Any further speakers?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, so would I.

The Deputy Speaker: And MP Vance Campbell would like to be associated with those remarks for Mr. [Grant].

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: And MP Michael Weeks, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: And MP Weeks.

Thank you, Members.

Any further speakers? Okay.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are no personal explanations.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: Premier, Government Bills.

FIRST READING

GAMING AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning again, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed

on the Order Paper for the next meeting: Gaming Amendment Act 2021.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier.

The next is Ms. Tinee Furbert.
Minister.

FIRST READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.
I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Human Rights Amendment Act 2021.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister Furbert.
The next is the Honourable Lawrence Scott.

FIRST READING

MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. Good day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Marine and Ports Services Amendment Act 2021.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are no Opposition Bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: No Private Members' Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: No notices of motions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker: The first Order we have is the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Nautilus Hotel) Order 2021.

Premier. Premier Burt.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 23

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Standing Order 23 be suspended to enable the House to proceed with the consideration of the Order entitled

the Tourism Investment (Nautilus Hotel) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections?
There appear to be none.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 23 was suspended.]

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Honourable Premier.

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (NAUTILUS HOTEL) ORDER 2021

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this [Tourism Investment \(Nautilus Hotel\) Order 2021](#) is to permit the grant of tax relief to the developers investing in the tourism economy, Nautilus Hotel and Atlantic Hotel Limited, which is in the national economic interests of Bermuda.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members will recall the Tourism Investment Act 2017 (which I will refer to going forward as "the Act") which became operative in November 2017. The primary objective of the Act is to make Bermuda more attractive to foreign investors and to incentivise and assist local tourism-related business owners to re-invest in their product. The Tourism Investment Act provides a scale of tax relief that can be accessed by developers through the grant of an Order approved by this House. And that scale ranges for relief from one year to ten years.

By way of background, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Nautilus property, located at 88 South Road, Warwick, is adjacent to the Azura Hotel residences located at 90 South Road, Warwick. The Church Bay Trust Company Ltd., licensed trust corporation and trustee of the Nautilus Trust, acquired the property on January 10, 2021, and is the sole shareholder in the Atlantic Hotel Limited. The trust submitted an application for a tourism investment Order on behalf of the Atlantic Hotel Limited on March 25, 2021, requesting the maximum full 10-year exemption available under the law.

The Nautilus property consists of 1.97 acres and is substantially zoned tourism, with the remainder being residential 2. The Nautilus property was acquired in order to serve as an expansion to project Azura, which has now been substantially developed by the principals of Church Bay Trust Company Ltd. The intent is to develop the Nautilus property in two phases. Phase 1(a) would redevelop the existing Nautilus main house into three units, creating between 20 and 24 new units. Phase 1(b) would renovate the remainder of the existing Nautilus house and infrastruc-

ture, creating additional hotel-quality amenities including but not limited to landscaping, lighting, roadways and a new saltwater pool. The lower floors of the existing residence building will be renovated to create two additional hotel residences, a total of six hotel keys, or suites.

Phase 2 will consist of the creation of 20 additional hotel residences, 9 two-bedroom suites and 11 three-bedroom suites. The total hotel inventory will include a potential maximum of 60 new or like-new keys, with a minimum of 24 keys if each owner only commits one mandatory key, or suite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the trust has committed \$3.5 million to the acquisition of the subject property and a further \$250,000 in closing costs. The construction costs of phases 1(a) and 1(b) are estimated to be \$3 million, and phase 2 of \$18.5 million. The total budget for the project costs, including acquisition, renovation, professional fees, transaction costs, reserves and working capital, is estimated at \$28 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in meeting the criteria for a new hotel, following consideration of the Government of Bermuda, this Order provides for the Nautilus property to receive, in summary:

- full relief from customs duty for a period of six years from the commencement of this Order;
- full exemption from hotel occupancy tax for a period of six years from the hotel's opening date;
- exemption from the employers' share of payroll tax for a period of six years from the hotel's opening date, subject to annual verification of a management training programme for Bermudians; and
- full exemption from land tax for one year starting six years after the hotel's opening date, subject to verification that the hotel employs 70 per cent Bermuda staff, and ending on the first anniversary of that date.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is forecast that 100 to 150 construction jobs will be engaged during the three-to-four-year development process of the Nautilus site. A similar number of jobs were created during the Azura development. The Nautilus development will also result in additional 25-plus jobs of varying duration in support of the development's design, engineering, financial, legal and associated disciplines. Upon completion of Nautilus, the combined Azura/Nautilus resort is expected to provide approximately 80 hospitality jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is welcome news and signals a strong vote of confidence in Bermuda's tourism and represents another product offering in support of rebuilding of the industry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government is well aware of the challenges ahead for our Island. However, our collective, successful management of the pandemic has stood Bermuda in good [stead]. The commitment and confi-

dence demonstrated by the Atlantic Hotel Limited is recognised and deeply appreciated. Bermuda cannot rest on its past laurels, and the constant renewal of our hotel product is critical. And this investment Order will help significantly in achieving this end.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Any further speakers?

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

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. I want to thank the Premier for the brief that he has given us.

As I look at this, this is a very positive thing to see, that we continue to see many of these projects, especially knowing that when we were the Government this was an opportunity that we took to extend and expand on the Azura. And now to see that under this Government those expansions continue to happen. So I am glad to see that the Government has been working along with the team there to ensure that expansion in the tourism industry continues to happen. It was good to also hear a briefing on exactly the kind of monies that will be spent, almost a total of about \$28 million, I understand from the briefing that will be put into the economy, which is always a welcome thing.

From the briefing, however, I was not quite sure if the Premier said March 25 that they put in for concessions. So based on that, hopefully he can correct me as to whether it was March or January. I think he said March 25 they put in for concessions. Just based on that briefing he gave, I was just wondering and curious as to, here we are now many months later and we are putting in for the suspension of Standing Order 23(3). And we are just doing all of this in one go. So I was hoping that the Premier would have given us an idea or an explanation as to why we are racing here to get such done when much of this was taking place back starting in January 2021 and then March 25. So it would be good if the Premier could explain to us why we are coming to the House at this last minute to get this done. I am grateful that we are getting it done. But it would have been nice to have at least some heads-up.

I also took note of what the Premier was saying as far as some of those concessions are concerned. And interestingly, now it looks as if the Government has expanded on the concessions based on what we did in the beginning as a Government, offering five years' extension. It looked like we are adding maybe six years to some of these concessions. And I was just curious as to some of why we were doing

that as well. What led to the changing of the precedent that was made in the past?

But outside of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that the Minister is bringing this. It is good news for Bermuda. And we want to thank once again Nautilus, Azura for expanding on this particular area and helping us to expand in the hotel industry. So those are my brief remarks. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Cannonier.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Swan, Honourable Member.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would like to echo the report of this continued development on what has been traditionally called Bermuda's Gold Coast and congratulate Azura and Mr. John Bush, who is no stranger to development, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Right down there in your neighbourhood of Tucker's Town he was very instrumental in the development of the Tucker's Point Club, which would have had its origin with the Progressive Labour Party Government even before the Azura came on the table. And the model that he has created through his years of experience in the industry is one that is working well. So the relationship that is being fostered by our Progressive Labour Party Government at this particular time is a carry-on from the relationship that would have been established even prior to the initiation of the very successful Azura. And we thank the former speaker, the former Premier, who recognised the continuation of the Azura under a prior administration as well.

I would encourage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, anyone in Bermuda who enjoys a good hotel product to pay the Azura a visit and to see the way in which the great architecture has been created, something that stood out in my mind. And I am sure that it would carry forth into the Nautilus building, which is just to the west, a little bit even more elevated than the Azura property there. The Nautilus that is going to be a part of it is an eco-friendly portion which features a rooftop that was near the ocean that was covered in Bermuda foliage, Bay Grapes and the like.

It also provided a bit of eco-friendly electric vehicles, which the owners . . . and there is a combination of ownership and leaseback facilities that allows the hotel product to function more economically and effectively. But if anyone knows how loud a vehicle could be, a bike and the like, going through, coming back maybe from a late night, there are certain areas where only electric vehicles and the quietness that they provide will be travelling through those areas there. I thought that was an outstanding feature and

great thoughtfulness to moving forward in a more conservation-conscious manner.

But I am sure that [with] the Premier's bringing the recommended concessions, every effort will be made to make it possible for the success. Because the success that tourism brings is the success that allows us to employ greater numbers of Bermudians. I am certainly supportive of the training aspect. And I will declare my interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a member of the Bermuda Entertainment Union. We look forward to some great Bermuda artists' having just another venue to perform at, and sending a shout-out to our sister, VaVa [Selena Fields], our Entertainment Union President, and all of our young entertainers coming who are looking forward to availing themselves of these increased opportunities in emerging products that are growing out of our vision to provide not only great tourism products, but also experiences in support of these products with the help of the Bermuda Tourism Authority and the BTA's experienced segment of the organisation.

So in support of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would know our passion [for] the tourism industry, and you well before me, having grown out of that industry and been very much a part of it all of our lives. So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to support this.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Swan.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. The Chair recognises the Honourable Cole Simons.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will begin by stating that I support this development. I also should indicate that I have an interest in that my family property and homestead is right across the street from this hotel development. So I am just putting that out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I support it. But I just have a question that I would like for the Tourism Minister/Premier to address. I note that the Hotel Concessions (for the former Surf Side Beach Club) Order 2016 was granted for five years, and this one for the similar sister organisation is granted for six years. So if the Minister can provide his reasoning for the increase to six years. I am not saying it is bad; I am just asking for clarification as to why they increased it to six years.

The other issue that I would like to address is the concessions. If you refer to the previous Surf Side one, you will note that the exemptions for the hotel occupancy and the payroll tax exemptions and the hotel occupancy tax exemptions were linked to other

services that will benefit Bermuda. For example, it said the hotel occupancy tax was linked to marketing of the hotel. So if the developer or the managers of the Nautilus Hotel and the Azura spent \$100,000 in marketing of the hotel, which will benefit Bermuda, that will offset some of the exemptions granted on the hotel occupancy tax. So I would like for the Minister to speak to why that was not included in this concession tax.

The same thing applied to the hotel occupancy. The previous [Order] for the sister company says [at section 3(1)(d)], "exemption from hotel occupancy tax . . . otherwise payable in respect of the hotel, for an amount equal to the sum expended by the hotel on entertainment . . ." Again that would support our entertainment industry, and there was not a requirement under this concession. So I am just asking the Minister why.

The same applies to the payroll tax. You can offset some of the exemptions by the inclusion of training Bermudians in the hotels. It was included and clearly defined in the [Hotel Concessions (Former Surf Side Beach Club) Order] with quantifiable exceptions for each of the years for each exemption. So can the Minister please provide his reasoning for not granting a similar exemption programme as was done for the sister property that was the former Surf Side Beach under Order 2016?

But generally speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think what they have done in Warwick at the Azura is first-class. It is tastefully done. I have been there many, many times. It is environmentally friendly. So you will have my support.

I do have concerns in regard to the number of units at Nautilus. But I would reserve further judgment on that until after I see the plans, because it is not a large property. And I know that they are going to have approximately 26 units (I think 26 units) on that property . . . 24 units and 50 to 60 keys. So there will be a lot of traffic in that area. So I do have reservations, but I will reserve judgment until I have more details and can see what the master plan is, as I said, because I am concerned about the environmental impact as well as the increased traffic in the area.

So those are my comments. But generally I will say that this tourism investment, Nautilus Hotel, has my blessing and I just would like to have more clarity as to why we have dissimilar hotel concession Orders for the same group of companies. But I understand we have to do what we have to do.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Simons.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am also pleased to support my colleagues and Members of the House today in this legislation that we are looking at here in regard to the development on the South Shore, on the Gold Coast as it was referred to earlier. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need to just reflect a bit and understand just how difficult it has been for development to take place over time, a lot of the various mechanisms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that both political parties when they have been the Government have tried to enact to make them be successful. So we are delighted here today to come to this Honourable Chamber at a special session and support it because the origins of this property, Azura, certainly were very difficult as we reflect back.

I do not think many members of the public are aware or even Members of Parliament are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when I was the Premier, Mr. Bush approached me in total exasperation in not being able to move this project forward. We sat down, we brought other people in the room and we made sure that we could get this off the ground. And now we see the fruits of that labour taking place. I was blessed, along with colleagues, to be at the opening of the resort, I guess a couple of years ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you might be aware, and certainly as the Opposition Leader who spoke just before me is well aware, it is a stunning property. Just about every view that you [take in] is amazing; and the next one is even better than the last one. So it is a stunning property, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to see the success that is actually taking place there. They have a model that appears to work. They have a model that appears to be successful. So I do not believe anyone in the House today is aggrieved in any way for coming back for a special session to deal with this legislation, because time is of the essence as we move forward.

I think it is also appropriate to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I reflected on earlier we must appreciate the frustration that many developers have to go through in getting things done. Certainly when you are in the hospitality industry, when you are in [the business of] building properties which people will come and visit, we need to certainly accept that nothing is easy nowadays because of the cost of doing business in Bermuda and because of the competition that these people face from all over the world.

So I want to commend the Government today for bringing this piece here, because it progressed in a very difficult environment. We need to continue to try to make that progress in a very difficult environment because quite often in today's world and certainly when you factor in the pandemic that seems to con-

tinue to grip parts of the world more strongly than others, it is a statement that my father would always say, *If you snooze, you lose*. We have to take opportunity when it knocks. We have to do the best that we can.

So I have no issue in supporting this today, and I wish them all the success as they develop a sister property right there. Certainly as colleagues have referred to, Mr. Bush has a history of wanting to support Bermuda not only in the East End of the Island, but now he is working his way up to the West End of the Island, and this is good to see. Let us build on this successful model. [Mr. Bush] has done it with concessions, which we know have to be tweaked from time to time so we can ensure that people are successful with those. But he did not get a special development order; he has not had any guarantees. And it appears that this model is working.

So congratulations to them! Congratulations to the Government for getting it done. They know that they have our support in the Opposition. To the people of Bermuda, this will show that quite often governments do work together. So let us not always focus on the negative. Let us focus on the positive. Let us make this one work. And with the success of this development, Mr. Deputy Speaker (this is the last thing I will say), this will give the opportunity for more Bermudians to get back to work, to seek gainful employment. And that is important.

So thank you for the time, Deputy Speaker, and we support this and look forward to continued success. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Dunkley.

Are there any further speakers?

Okay. Premier.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the support of honourable colleagues. I am not entirely certain where there is this conversation regarding a special session; this is the regularly scheduled session of the House of Assembly. So I am not sure where this *special session* matter is coming from. But what I will say is that I am grateful for the support of Members, allowing this to be moved today before we come back in September. Because the fact is that, as we all know, this Government is committed to economic recovery and committed to providing the conditions for jobs to be created. And a delay of six weeks is a delay of six weeks' employment for persons. We are not trying to delay employment. So we are trying to move as quickly as possible, as methodically as possible.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Point of clarification, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the record.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier, Premier, just one second. There is a point of clarification? Would you allow?

Hon. E. David Burt: I do not need to yield, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Okay. Go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I thank the Honourable Premier for his indulgence.

The reason why I said "special" (and I could have chosen a different word) was last week was supposed to be the last session of Parliament. And so today was an extra sitting, and we are happy to come back for this extra sitting; we are happy to come back anytime.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not correct.

The Deputy Speaker: All right.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is not correct.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue. Continue, Honourable Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is incorrect. The schedule that was submitted to the Opposition and the schedule that was submitted was always that we were meeting on this day, the 23rd of July. So this is not a special sitting. This is the day that we were always scheduled to sit, the Friday before Cup Match. As you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am wearing my red today.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, well, well. What can I say?

Hon. E. David Burt: I got it.

That much being said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so it is not a special sitting. It is a regularly scheduled sitting.

But I am grateful that we are able to advance this matter today and grateful for the support of Members of the Opposition.

There are just a few things of which I would like to say because I know that a number of questions have been asked. The first thing that I would like to say is that I think that it is important to recognise that, although the Nautilus property is on the same and adjacent to—noting that the Nautilus property is adjacent to the property which was the former Surf Side, which is Azura, I think that it is important that the Honourable Opposition Leader recognises that concessions of which were given are under two separate

Acts, and they are two different Acts. So the hotel concession Order that was given by the former Government under the old Hotels Concession Act is a different Order than this. And there are different provisions inside of the Hotels Concession Act and the Tourism Investment Act.

So I think it is important. When they are saying, *What about the differences that exist in one or the other?*, I think that it is important to recognise that they are two different Acts. So they are two different provisions which are there. Concessions under the Hotels Concession Order are [under] a different Act, and hotels under a Tourism Investment Order are under a different [Act]; the Tourism Investment Act is different. So in this case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are two separate properties, and the concessions that existed previously under the Hotels Concession Act for the actual former Surf Side property (or the Azura property) still stand and are still maintained.

These concessions are for the separate development, the separate development over on the Nautilus side. So there are the concessions which existed before, [and] have not disappeared. Those exist for the Azura site. And under the Tourism Investment [Act], these [concessions] are specifically for the additional development, additional units which are being used to add to additional hotel keys for the property. So they do work in tandem, as it is an overall development. But it is important to note that that is why they are separate.

So it is not as though if there are not tax concessions for making sure there is Bermudian entertainment that will take place at the Azura Hotel. That is still continuing. That is not invalidated by this Order. The Honourable Member for constituency 2 spoke about the importance of Bermudian entertainment and the importance of promotion of Bermudians inside of the industry.

And that is what this Government is committed to and it continues to be committed to. But it is important to know that [these] are two separate Acts, and so this is an Order under the Tourism Investment Act.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: We could not hear you, Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. Okay. How much did you hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: We have got seven minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am sorry. How much did you hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay. Got it.

The Deputy Clerk: We lost about the last 30 seconds or so.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, we lost the last 30 seconds; I am sorry.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am saying is that these concessions are not cookie cutter. Hence, you have to examine them based upon the circumstances that exist. As I would have said in my brief, the developers requested a full 10-year exemption. The Government examined what we are looking at with the Cabinet and the Minister of Finance and decided that six years is more appropriate. We have to have a delicate balance between what it is that we are doing insofar as economic development and what it is that we are doing insofar as revenue because any revenue forgone is money that is not coming into the treasury that can pay for other matters.

So it is certainly important to provide employment opportunities. It is certainly important to provide hotel development in Bermuda. It is certainly important to make sure we upgrade our amenities that we offer for our tourism. But it is also important that we balance and take a balanced approach in these matters. So we examined these things on a case-by-case basis, and on this case the Government decided that this was what was most appropriate, given the circumstances.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that I have answered the questions of which have been put forward, and I move that the said Draft Order be approved and a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to this Order being approved?

There appear to be none.

This Order is approved and [a message] will be sent to Her Excellency, the Governor.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled, Tourism Investment (Nautilus Hotel) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Deputy Speaker: As it is 12:25, I think we will break for lunch at this time and return at two o'clock. So the House stands adjourned for lunch. Thank you. Have a great lunch.

Proceedings suspended at 12:25 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. We are back on air, in Parliament after lunch. I hope all have had a nourishing lunch for the mind, the body and the soul.

We will continue the Orders of the Day. The second Order of the Day is consideration of the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021.

I think the Attorney General, Minister Simmons is going to do this Bill. Am I correct Minister Simmons?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Yes, you are, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You may continue.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you and good afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that consideration be given to the Draft Order entitled the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

DRAFT ORDER

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 4) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable Chamber to consider the Order entitled [Public Health \(COVID-19\) Emergency Extension \(No. 4\) Order 2021](#).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Members will be aware that the current Public Health Emergency Order is scheduled to last until 23 August 2021. Emergency orders, which have been in place since 30 June 2020 following the state of emergency put in place on 1 April 2020, are made pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and declare that a public health emergency exists in Bermuda due to a communicable disease that poses a threat to the Island.

We live on a very small island and as we know from two very serious outbreaks in December of last year and in March/April of this year, COVID-19 can spread quickly and with devastating effect. It strikes at the heart of our community as hundreds of people test positive, thousands end up in quarantine, and sadly, people succumb to it and die. To date, Bermuda has lost 33 lives to COVID-19.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can slow the spread of the virus by following basic public health advice like wearing a mask to cover our nose and mouth, as well as physically distancing, downloading the WeHealth Bermuda app, and avoiding the three “C’s” of closed spaces, crowded places and close contacts. The more barriers and space there are between you and others, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we have discussed in this Chamber before, we are fortunate in that we have added another layer of protection—the COVID-19 vaccine. As it has been said many times, vaccines save lives, and it is no different with the Pfizer and the AstraZeneca vaccines being used in Bermuda now. Both vaccines have proven to be highly effective after two doses. While you, as an immunised person, can still test positive, evidence shows you are likely to experience few, if any symptoms or be affected by only a mild version of the disease which your body is better able to fight off the virus. This means we can keep people out of the hospital and have fewer deaths due to COVID-19. With a reduced viral load on your system, it is also hoped you are less likely to transmit the coronavirus as well, and research so far is promising.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government is firmly of the view that the COVID-19 vaccine is vital to our return to normal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bermuda’s goal of community immunity will be achieved when 70.0 per cent of the population or 64,054 people have been immunised. To date, 65.0 per cent of the population has been vaccinated with one dose and 63.7 per cent of the population has been immunised with two doses. When you take into consideration just the eligible Bermuda population, those who are over 12 years of age, 73.3 per cent of the population has received either one or two doses of the vaccine. These are great results so far and I will pause there to thank all those people who have taken the step to get vaccinated. Your vaccination not only protects you, it also protects your family and our Bermuda community. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Government, we recognise it will take more time to reach that goal of community immunity. Younger age groups, in particular, have not yet taken full advantage of the vaccines available. However, when the vaccine campaign began in January, the Government’s immediate goal was to protect our most vulnerable population—our seniors.

I am extremely pleased to report that 81 per cent of people between 65 and 79 years old now have one or both vaccine doses and 87 per cent of seniors over the age of 80 have one or both doses. This means we are well on our way to protecting our senior population. To repeat—preventing infection, the onset of the disease itself, and community spread via a programme of mass vaccination will be a critical part of how we navigate our way out of this pandemic. We

have all felt the impact that COVID-19 has had on us personally and we all now know it has impacted our Island's economy. Getting vaccinated is an integral part of our ongoing collective effort to reduce the spread of the virus here on the Island. This is essential, not only for our health, but also to allow us to return to a sense of normalcy with our daily lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members, as we all know, COVID-19 was caused by a new virus that spread quickly throughout the world. Unfortunately, it still exists, in large part, because it can be transmitted so easily through people who are in close contact, both through coughs and sneezes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Acting Minister of Health, I consulted with the CMO (Chief Medical Officer) and he told me that a communicable disease of the first or second category, namely COVID-19, continues to pose a severe threat to public health in Bermuda. The outbreak this past spring which saw a sharp rise in positive cases and an increase in deaths highlighted the impact of variants of concern. In that outbreak it was a UK variant of COVID-19 B.1.1.7 which was the variant of concern. To control and contain the spread of infection, public health measures, such as those provided for in regulations, will continue to be relevant and necessary beyond 23 August 2021.

This Order before us now will extend the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Order 2021, made under the Public Health Act 1949, to permit the Governor to continue the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Powers Regulations 2021, which impose extraordinary measures necessary in the interests of public health to prevent, control, and suppress COVID-19.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 3) Order 2021 was made under the affirmative resolution procedure, effective 24 June 2021, for 60 days, expiring on 23 August 2021. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage on globally and a public health emergency continues to exist on our shores. Therefore, in accordance with sections 107A(3) and 107A(4) of the [Public Health Act 1949](#), I bring the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 to this Honourable Chamber to seek approval for the extension of the Public Health Emergency for a further 38 days, ending on 30 September 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Ms. Simmons.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It took a while to get on because my service was buffering a little bit, so let me know if my signal is not clear. It seems to be clear at the present time.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I am in God's country in Devonshire, so I am surprised it does not work.

The Deputy Speaker: That is down further in Hamilton Parish.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Well, okay. I am not going to argue about that one.

An. Hon. Member: I concur.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Acting Minister of Health and the Attorney General for providing the background to the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 and extending it until 30 September of this year, 2021.

I will say a couple of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First and foremost, this Order carries very extensive and broad powers that the Government can enact. And I say that it is important because we have been under these conditions for, it seems like, a very prolonged period of time. As the Acting Health Minister has said, we still face a public health emergency, so this Order is necessary at this time.

As we debate this today, I will try to keep my points succinct. But it is important that some of the things are said. As we debate this today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to appreciate and realise that because we have been in this pandemic period for some time, since March of 2020, Bermudians are very frustrated, they are very agitated, and many of them have been deflated by what is taking place. And this is not blaming any person or any entity or the Government in particular, this is just stating the facts.

What we have also seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, depending on who you are, what you do, and how you can support your family and your loved ones, everyone is in a different position.

And so, here we are at the end of July of 2021, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and people from one end of the Island to the other end have been impacted directly by COVID-19. And many of the people on the Island are feeling some challenges to their life that will be lasting for a period of time. Most of us have struggled to get through this period, whether it be our daily activities have been changed, been crimped, whether our mental health has been challenged because our life has changed—and I have said this before, but I

think it bears repeating. And so, I think Bermuda is in a fragile position. A fragile position because the pandemic has impacted us—

[No audio]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —has for a long period of time, and now we are trying our best to get up and running again and get some normalcy back to what we normally do.

We are not there yet. There appears to be light at the end of the tunnel, but when we debate an Order like this today, which extends the Public Health Emergency to the end of September 2021, it is clear, as the Minister said, that we are still in a public health emergency. And so, while people might think they see the light at the end of the tunnel, we are still in the tunnel and there is a lot of work that has to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second point that I would like to make is that it is noticeable—the change within the Government. And why do I say that? I say it on a couple of points, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in the beginning of the pandemic the Government was very keen to consult with the Opposition about everything to do with COVID-19. In fact, at that time (it was before the last election), the Honourable Premier would call the Opposition Leader (and at that time it was the Honourable Craig Cannonier) on great occasion to have conversations to inform what was going on or to listen to what the Opposition Leader and his colleagues had to say. We have noticed that change in consultation. The consultation has dried up to a certain extent. And so here we are today with this Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021, and there has been a glaring lack of consultation on that.

I say that because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Members of Parliament, we have been reached out to more than ever before through the pandemic because people want to know what is going on. People want to share their concerns with their duly elected MP and people want to hear opinions from their MP on what they think is going to take place and how we move forward together. And so, if Members of the House are kept in the dark in some ways, it is clear when constituents (or anyone throughout the Island) want to speak to us about these issues, we are unable to give them accurate information, which they should expect.

Now, this Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 is a very strong piece of legislation. The Government believes it is necessary and that is why we are here today. But after 16 or 17 months of the pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would beg to state that there are many in the community who think we need to move forward and that these types of orders and the strong hand that they can show are not necessary at this time. The Honourable Acting Minister of Health stated the case on why they think it is necessary. And here we are, we

seem to be stuck in a position where we have the Delta variant impacting some people on the Island, mostly brought into the Island because of travellers who have come in and tested positive. So, we have seen our rate creeping up very slowly, which is good news.

And on one hand, while people talk about the strength of the Delta variant and how transmissible it is on the other hand, what the Government talks about is the light at the end of the tunnel, the vaccination and that is how we control COVID-19, and that everyone should get the vaccination. We see that we are drifting because vaccination rates have basically stagnated since the end of May. The Government released some figures just last night and the Minister also quoted some figures today during the brief. But if you take a look at the last three weeks, we have only seen an increase of 3.4 per cent in the vaccination rate. So, if that is the light at the end of the tunnel, we have risen from 30.0 per cent vaccination rate at the end of June to . . . sorry, [from] 60.3 per cent at the end of June to 63.7 per cent on July 20, [this is] a small increase over three weeks.

And, at the same time, we were told in the beginning of the vaccination . . . and Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are aware that the vaccinations really started in January to have a meaningful impact on our community and how we can control COVID-19. Vaccinations took off at a pretty good pace at the beginning in January, February and March, and [now] we see them slow, so much so that the Government's target for when we would get to that herd immunity or community immunity has changed over time.

It was originally said that by Bermuda Day (which I believe was on May 28 this past year) we would be to that point. Well, Bermuda Day came and went and we are not there yet. We were told that we potentially would be there by Cup Match. Well, Cup Match is here next week and it is obvious we are not going to make that 70 [per cent] or 75 per cent.

But interestingly enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this week, or I believe it was last week, Dr. Weldon said that because of the Delta variant that community immunity rate, the vaccination rate, would be bumped up to about 87 per cent. And the Government has been somewhat restrained on any information on what the actual rate is at the present time. So, if the rate is in the upper 80s we still have a long way to go, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that long way to go, Mr. Deputy Speaker, shows that the pandemic is still with us, it is still a public health emergency to a great extent, but what do we do about it? And as the Attorney General has said, we know so much more now than we did in March of 2020, we know what COVID-19 is, we know the symptoms of COVID-19, we know how to deal with COVID-19 by social distancing and wearing masks and making sure we practice the best of hygiene conditions, we do have certain drugs that work to help us fight COVID-19. There is some debate in the community

about some of the drugs that are not used to a great extent that could be of a greater benefit, I might add as well. And we know that the vaccinations work.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing we also know is that there is a strong group of people who want to get vaccinated—and we have seen 63.7 per cent. But there is an equally vocal group of people who do not wish to get vaccinated. And it is clear to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at this time that is the balance of that 63.7 per cent, so, you know, you have still got a significant minority who are not inclined to get it at this point.

Now, I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people will change their minds when they get better information and more information and more accurate information. But my colleagues and I are very concerned because, as it stands today the rate has stalled, and the public health information required to have people look at it and feel comfortable getting the vaccination is really not there. And so, what do we do about this? And this is a big—

[No audio]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —The biggest frustration is, I believe in the vaccine. I took the vaccine early on in the programme. I have had no side effects from taking the vaccine.

I feel, Honourable Member, that it is a good thing for people to take. My family has taken the vaccine at the same time. And I do everything I can to try to help convince people that they should be comfortable taking the vaccination as well because I respect their rights. I respect everyone's right to decide on the future of their health, but I believe this is the way to go.

But the challenge that we face as a community—and this is not just the Government's challenge, it is a challenge for us all—is that we have got to get that 63.7 [per cent] to get much higher. If it does not, we could be back here in another month extending the Emergency Health Order again, for the fifth time or the sixth time or the seventh time. We could be doing this through Christmas. And in the winter who knows what will take place from there.

And so, while vaccinations offer hope . . . and I would be remiss, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I did not say that they are not perfect. We do know they offer some protection, but we also know that you can still catch COVID-19, you still need to protect yourself. You can still spread it if you are vaccinated, we know that. But they offer help and they have done tremendous things in communities throughout the world that get vaccinated. And that is one of the reasons why I think now, as we face a slight spike, that we are in a better position to contain it because our vaccination rate is reasonable, but we still have that long way to go, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, I urge everyone today . . . all of us as Members of Parliament should be speaking positively about the vaccine and what can be done. And I applaud those in the medical community who have spoken out, like Dr. Ramon Arcott, just to name one. I thought the interviews that he did were first-class. They were simple, they were direct, they provided information which was easy for everyone to understand and accept, and it was a compelling case, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so, I urge people to get vaccinated. And I urge people, as we have this conversation, to let us be respectful about it. There is too much disrespect going back and forth from some people who are vaccinated and blaming other people who are not vaccinated for, you know, prolonging this situation longer, or the non-vaccinated people saying you are infringing on their rights. Let us do this in a grown-up way so we can move forward because we are all tired, we are all agitated, we are all frustrated by COVID-19. Those feelings will not go away until we get in a better position.

And I am not comfortable here today with another Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) because we have come so long, but we have still got a good distance to travel. And until people tell me a better way we can get out of this challenge that we are in, I believe in the science. I believe that the vaccinations will work. And I believe that the vaccinations are important for us to get.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to dwell on this point for just a bit longer because, like you . . . I know you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You exercise on a regular basis. You are just a couple of years older than me, but you have still got a spring in your step. You take care of your health. I know you exercise all the time. I know you eat right and you try to get a lot of sleep—that is the same thing I do. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do that every day. And I learned a hard but valuable lesson when I was a young boy—I was not even a man at that time—when my father died early because he smoked cigarettes. And my doctor told me, he said, *You know, you and your brother and your sisters, if you live healthy, you will live a long life, you don't have to pass early like your father.* And that is what I have tried to do.

So, knowing that I enjoy life, a healthy life, I wanted to think about this vaccination process very clearly to make sure it was the right thing to do. And I thought through it, I listened to the people, I worked through it, I talked to people who are in the know—whether in the medical community or learned and studied people—and I took the vaccination. But then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I went a step further.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of [clarification], Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: My family got the vaccination, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I am happy to take the point of clarification.

Mr. Christopher Famous: [Clarification], Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I do not think the Deputy Speaker is unmuted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think you are unmuted. You are muted.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, I had some technical difficulties.

Thank you, Mr. Dunkley for allowing the clarification.

Mr. Famous.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I just want to concur with the Honourable Member from constituency 10. He was so excited to get the vaccine that he jumped in advance of his age group.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a clarification.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I guess, you know, those are the games that some people will try to play during Parliament. And the Honourable Member, you know, is prone to like to do these types of things. But if the Honourable Member wants any further clarity, he can speak to me about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But he led me right to where I wanted to go.

And I was so sold on the need for this vaccine that I asked my family to get it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, it was my 85-year-old mother. You know, at a certain age our bodies start to be less resilient to things. But she had no hesitation in taking it. I would never, ever, ever suggest to my mother she do anything that is not going to help her live a productive and happy life, but I was sold on the vaccine and took her there.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have got two young daughters, one just had a baby, and the other one has not had any children yet, they both took the vaccine. Why . . . I would never jeopardise their ability, especially to have children or to raise a family, they took the vaccine. So, in short, the family has had it. None of us have had issues.

Now, I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just like anything that you can put in your body—you look at any prescription you get. You go to the drug-store and buy a bottle of aspirin—there are warning

labels on the back of it, all right? So, there can be some challenges that people can have, and with the vaccine there have been some from time to time. But the health authorities in countries have allowed it to be used for emergency application because of the pandemic. It was developed over a prolonged period of time through the years, they felt comfortable with the safety, and I feel very strongly that in a very short period of time it will be given the full approval.

And so, I urge Bermudians to think outside the box a little bit. Because that is what it is here. Sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in a small community will get into a box and we never think outside the box or listen outside the box. We have to listen outside this box here because, just like you, I do not want to be in this position when we are in the Christmas session.

We, as a community, have done a hell of a good job in following rules and regulations, which quite often we have not accepted. But we have followed them to a great degree, and it put us in a much better position. Let us not make this any more difficult on us because we want to get back to a better way of life and a lot of people need to get back to being able to pick up the pieces in the life that they lead, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so, reservedly, I accept Government's intention here today with the explanation that was [given]. It would have been nice to have some more communication on why we got to this point. We did not have that, but we had it in the beginning of COVID-19, and I hope we can get back to that type of communication again. We in the Opposition are willing to work with the Government to do everything we can to raise those vaccination rates to get to a level where we can have more freedoms put back in our lives, where our lives can be that much easier, where we can start to let down our guard just a little bit.

We have all learned a couple of things in the last 16 months. One is, we have got our guard up, we do not get close to people anymore, we have got a mask around us all the time. I was just looking at some of my masks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they are starting to look old and frayed because we have used them so much and washed them so much and gotten new masks. And, you know, I think masks are the most littered thing in Bermuda at this time. If you look down on the sidewalks and the streets, you will see masks at all times.

So, we need to move forward. And the only way we are going to move forward is by vaccinations. And let us forget about some of these theories that if we close off the Island and we don't allow anybody in, we can get rid of COVID-19. It is not going to happen, because as soon as you open up it can come back in. Look at Australia. Look at these other countries. And while we have had a couple of spikes, probably three spikes now, in COVID-19, we have managed to contain them because we had some good practices in

place. And so, we need to continue to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to continue to push to get the vaccinations to work.

So, while we have been critical of some of the things that Government has done—and the record will state that—reservedly, we can support this legislation today. But we would like to see more communication to us and to the community on how long it will be necessary and, before we take any further steps to have a No. 5 Order, on why that would be required at the time.

So, let us get away from the drifting with the vaccination rates. Let us pump that up. Let us get to a more enviable position, and then some of the restrictions that have been lifted can stay lifted and people can start to do the things they enjoy in life—next week's Cup Match!

And Cup Match is a SafeKey event and it will see a much more minimal crowd than we have ever had before. And I hope the event is a good event, again, because there is so much history, so much tradition we need to remember. We need to enjoy that. I still think that there are many people who are not going to be able to attend Cup Match because of the limitations in size. And you have to admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that some people will be uncomfortable going around crowds. But we need to get back to the Bermuda we really enjoy, where you go to Cup Match and you can have a great time and not worry about a pandemic and a SafeKey and all these types of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We can only do that if we all get involved in the process and get the vaccination rate up to protect our community.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for your remarks, Honourable Member Mr. Dunkley.

The next speaker, I think, is Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would like to thank the Opposition's spokesperson for their reserved support of the Extension Order. The Government is aware that this brings, you know, it comes with extensive and more powers. And we do not take this lightly. But the Order is necessary. You know it is obvious. There is enough information out in the community, press conferences and news articles, it is very obvious that the original reason for the initial Public Health Emergency Order still exists.

It has been a long time—16, 17, 18 months—and people are getting tired. And we may have to do this a few more times. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing is more lasting or permanent than death. And that is what we are trying to avoid here by putting the Government in the best position to react.

The rate of vaccination has slowed, but that is not unusual. There are usually spurts and lulls in a programme of this nature. And right now we find our-

selves in a bit of a slow-down in the uptick in the vaccinations. And you know, a target is just that, a target, it is an estimation based on the best information available at any particular time. So, forgive the Government for having not met certain targets, but it is an estimation based on the best information available at the time.

We know that the Chief Medical Officer has determined that a communicable disease—COVID-19—continues to pose a threat to us, and we can see the damage that can be quickly done by just looking at what happened earlier this year. We need the public measures provided for in the regulations to continue to control and contain COVID-19 and its variants because it continues to rage in countries around the world.

You know we can look at what happened in BVI—over 2,000 cases and 16 deaths in two weeks. They had to reimpose a curfew from 7:00 pm to 5:00 am. They had to close bars and gyms and hairdressers. Summer camps were postponed. And this was because they reopened their borders without adequate measures in place. Barbados—night-time curfews reinstated, social gatherings banned, spectators banned from sporting events. Australia—the major cities of Melbourne and Sidney are in lockdown because of the Delta variant, the spread of the Delta variant. The UK—enormous amounts of cases reported recently—in excess of 51,000 in a 24-hour period; millions in quarantine, public services being cancelled.

Yes, we are taking a slow and measured . . . we are trying to strike that right balance between border protection and freedoms. It is controversial at times, but as we can see from recent data around the world the Delta variant is nothing to be played with. It is serious. That is not what we want for Bermuda.

But you can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Bermuda is open. We have lifted many of the restrictions that we were previously under. There is no curfew. We do have the possibility for large cultural events. People can enjoy themselves more freely on the water and that goes for everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated.

You know we just enjoyed the first round of the Eastern Counties and, previous to that, the Western Counties. Bars and restaurants are open. Summer camps are open. We are seeing more people arriving on our shores. Hotels are seeing increased bookings. And there is the promise of cruise ships arriving in August. So, in spite of having the Emergency Orders in place until August, Bermuda is open. And that is not going to change by extending this to September 30. Bermuda will remain open. And we hope to achieve the 70 per cent, but it is taking a little longer than we anticipated.

We have come this far, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by following the science. And most of us, or a vast majority of us, have done our part in connection with that, and we are grateful to the 99 per cent of the

people in this country who follow the laws, the rules, and acknowledge and know that this virus is real.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my comments.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Mr. Campbell.

Are there any further speakers?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: [This is] Ianthia Simmons-Wade.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, Ms. Simmons, I could not recognise the voice.

Honourable Member, Ms. Simmons-Wade, you have the floor.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge the support of the Opposition to the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021.

First of all, for someone who has been very intimately involved with the vaccine programme, I would just like to update everyone who is listening in terms of what we as a Government are doing and what we are doing moving forward. As you are aware, the outreach vaccination programme went to all areas of the Island and we had great success. Many people came out, because we went into the community, to get their vaccines. Moving forward, we actually have a very aggressive programme that is—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: —Mr. Deputy Speaker, your microphone is on.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I am trying . . . we have got some technical difficulties.

Carry on.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Okay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the moment we are at 65 per cent, something that our Island should be extremely proud of in terms of the numbers coming up. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must be mindful of the fact that the individuals left who are not vaccinated are those individuals who are waiting, those individuals who are on the fence, and also those individuals who will never get the vaccine.

Working along with the Ministry of Health, the Bermuda Health Council, and DCI [Department of Communication and Information], we have developed an aggressive programme to get the information out to

individuals who need that information and access to be able to decide if they are going to take the vaccine. This week alone government workers and Corporation of Hamilton workers and the Department of Communication had an opportunity to come and get the vaccine.

On Wednesday night we offered the vaccine at Harbour Night for people who [might think] *It's there; I'm going to take it*. This weekend on Sunday at the three cricket matches, we will also have the vaccine available for individuals who wish to take it. On Saturday we are again going to go into the community. What we have shown that has been extremely successful is when we come to the community, people will get the vaccine.

But we do have to be mindful. There are individuals who will never get the vaccine. And this is very much a personal choice. And this is something as a Government that we do respect. The only thing that we ask is for those individuals who decide not to take the vaccine, to comply with the rules and regulations so that they remain safe. We have to respect personal choice for individuals.

I do believe that with the aggressive approach that we are taking, we will get to that 70 per cent, we will get to that 75 per cent. And the support of the people in the community will ensure that the numbers remain low and the Government will take the necessary action to ensure that the population is safe and that our borders are safe. We should be proud of our success. And I believe the Opposition has offered their support, and we certainly appreciate their support in getting people who want to get vaccinated, vaccinated, and supporting those individuals who make that personal choice.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Simmons-Wade for your remarks.

Are there any other speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will let the Minister go ahead, if you want, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I will yield to Mr. Pearman.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Pearman, you may continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be brief.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are debating here today is yet another extension of emergency powers. And that phrase is being tossed around quite lightly of late. But we have to remind ourselves that emergency powers are the most draconian of powers that governments are able to wield against its citizens, the citizen and the state. And whenever you extend or create emergency powers, your question really is, On what basis? And on what justification?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember more than a year ago now, I guess, that we held a meeting of Parliament to first consider emergency powers in about April or, perhaps, it was May of last year. And at the time, the medical concerns over COVID-19 were so great that only a few MPs were allowed to attend the House. I remember the then Honourable Pat Gordon-Pamplin came in with a plastic face mask, gloves and possibly even booties. And you are laughing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I remember you were there and you were sitting 10 chairs to my left, I think we were very, very socially distanced, but there were about four or five of us present in the Chamber to discuss it.

And if you recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gave perhaps a slightly self-indulgent speech, but I did thump the top of it, and I did so for an important reason. Because whenever you are dealing with something like this, with emergency powers, you really are at the outer limits of what governments—democratic governments—are allowed to do, and you are really rubbing up very strongly against the individual rights of citizens. We are dealing here with the civil liberties of individuals. We are dealing here with constitutionally enshrined rights. And so, I fully accept it as a tricky area, but you have to define the parameters of your decision-making.

In my view then, as I expressed on the day—and we had a joke about it afterwards—but in my view then I stated something along these lines, that emergency powers must be no wider than is absolutely necessary, given that it is curtailing the civil liberties of individuals. And so, that really is the test. You need to contract emergency powers to their bare minimum. They should be no wider than is needed. You should not have slough or shadow along the outside of powers that really have unintended consequences and restrictions that really are not fair and should not be in place.

And the last time, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . actually we lost Mr. Deputy Speaker. Oh, you are back. I do not know if you could still hear me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we lost you for a moment. You can.

The last time we were here debating the extension of emergency powers was the sitting of the House, I think, four weeks ago or so. And at the time we were looking at a two-month extension. And the Loyal Opposition at that time suggested that we felt the most appropriate method was a one-month extension and to then take stock, look at the medical evi-

dence at the time. Because really it is the medical evidence on the day, at the time, and as predicted, that governs how much we need.

And so, we have not shifted off that position. Our view is that it is very easy for the House to come back in. We note the date to which the extension is going is well beyond our next sitting, our next sitting is on the 10th of September. And as so many MPs observed last week when we discussed the issue of SDOs [Special Development Orders], it is very easy for this House to be recalled and to be court given that we do not need that many people to form a quorum. And so, that was our position then and that is our position now.

I echo both the words and the sentiments of my honourable colleague, MP Michael Dunkley, who set out as the Shadow Health Minister in greater detail than I intend to our thinking on the issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an important issue. It is not just up there in the ether, it is not just philosophy; it is real, it is pragmatic, it is day to day, it impacts upon each and every one of us. And we have seen some significant impositions on the civil liberties of people and, in some cases, on the constitutional liberties of people. There are cases going through the court that may be successful, they may be unsuccessful. Whether or not the court is satisfied that civil liberties—constitutional civil liberties—have been breached is a matter for the court.

But, again, when we are looking at the decision-making, which is in the hands of the Government as imbued by Parliament, we must ask ourselves, is this broader than is absolutely necessary? And one of the issues that, it seems to me, is a hot-button issue, is the issue of making those who arrive on our shores who are unvaccinated go and quarantine—at their expense—in a government facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke on this issue before on the motion to adjourn, and I do not intend to repeat myself. But I would simply say, respectfully, that policy must come to an end. It needs to end.

Another issue that, again, is a hot-button issue is the testing regime and the significance of testing that we see here in Bermuda when you contrast it with other places. I am delighted to read in the papers that we will be reducing our testing regime. And I think that that is an excellent thing and it is in accordance with the medical evidence which, after all, is one of the fundamental touchstones. I am slightly disappointed that we did not hear that in this Honourable House rather than getting to read about it in the press, but there we are. That seems to be the way of the world these days on this Island. But I do think that the reduction of testing is sensible, and I am pleased to see it happening. And, again, it is consistent with the medical evidence as we know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the third hot-button issue is the issue of the status of antibodies. We see much in the paper of late about very passionate and vocal

Bermudians who are expressing their views that where they have the antibody, that is as good as, or better than, or no worse than—and I do not know because I am not a doctor—the vaccine. I am not going to get into the medical argument, but I recognise that, again, we are at that touchstone, we are at that friction point between civil liberties and emergency powers.

I would invite the Government and those who are the decision-makers—for it is not us who are in the Opposition who are the decision-makers—to consider that status of antibodies. I am not saying it should be endorsed or not, I do not know. I do not have the medical expertise. But I would invite the decision-makers to consider the issue because there are a sufficient number of Bermudians who are quite passionate about it and their voice should be at least listened to and heard, even if the decision goes against them in the end, and it may well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I conclude, I just want to touch on the vaccination issue as opposed to the un-vaccination issue. On the vaccination issue, it is hopeful to see that our Island is . . . and I may not have the most up-to-date number today, but within the past 24 to 48 hours it was 63.7 per cent, which is heartening. And let us hope that we can get to the appropriate level of vaccination in Bermuda where we can achieve herd mentality . . . excuse me, herd protection rather, not herd mentality—herd protection . . . immunity. And I do note that this number has been shifting of late. We have seen a higher number being suggested by Dr. Weldon, again, I defer to the medical betterers there who will know more than I.

But right at the beginning, when we were blessed with the opportunity to have vaccines in Bermuda well ahead of many, many, many other places in the world, I had the opportunity to be interviewed on this on the television. My advice then remains just the same as my advice now: It is a matter of personal choice, yes, absolutely. But I would encourage anyone who is concerned about whether or not to have the vaccine, and who has not yet had the vaccine, to speak with their doctor. Because it is a personal choice, it is about the individual, but it is also about the community as a whole and the protection of all of us. And so, again, from my personal point of view, it is a matter of personal choice, but I invite anyone with any questions to discuss the issue with their doctor, it is very important.

So, with those brief words, I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I notice Mr. Famous is keen to inform us of his wisdom.

Thank you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot hear you, or I cannot, anyway.

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

The Acting Speaker: Member, while Mr. Deputy Speaker is getting up, you have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon to the people of Bermuda. Good afternoon, Madam Acting Speaker. Can you see me clearly?

The Acting Speaker: I did just now, yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Can you see me now?

The Acting Speaker: No, you were up. You were definitely . . .

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I am saying can you see me?

The Acting Speaker: You talking to me made me change my format, now I need to change my screen format, again. That is why I do not see you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. I wanted to make sure I was appropriately dressed this Friday.

Hon. Renee Ming: You are appropriately dressed. You look amazing.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you, thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Exactly. We do not have to worry about you, MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Let me take off the little red thing here. I do not want anybody to have the wrong idea.

The Acting Speaker: Now, I know that you wish to make some compelling statements, so I do not want you using up your time having to convince us of how handsome you look. Because we have—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: You know the real challenge?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon, again.

The Acting Speaker: MP Famous, you have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you, Madman Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Acting Speaker, as you know, this issue has been one of the most contentious issues of our recent history. In Bermuda for 400 years we have been used to racial divisions. We have been used to economic divisions. And this week, we are used to Cup Match divisions, Madam Acting Speaker. But what we are not used to is our people being divided for medical reasons on medical issues. We have it inside of our own families, inside of our organisations, inside of our neighbourhoods, and inside of our country—whether it be the contention about vaccination or quarantine, wearing a mask, whether COVID-19 is real. Well, I am here to say to the people of Bermuda is that, unfortunately, COVID-19 is real.

Madam Acting Speaker, in America, to our west, less than 50 per cent of the persons are immunised. In the UK, to our east, less than 50 per cent are immunised. In Canada, to our north, less than 20 per cent are immunised. These are the countries that all visitors and all locals will travel to our country from.

So, what does that mean, Madam Acting Speaker? That means there is a high probability that we can get the Delta variant. Hence, we are here today extending these powers as, the Honourable Member Scott Pearman said, emergency powers to prevent the next outbreak.

Madam Acting Speaker, in the US the Delta variant is now raging—95 per cent of all deaths are now attributed to those who have not yet been vaccinated.

Madam Acting Speaker, in the UK, our mother country, there are 50,000 people being infected with the Delta variant every day, one of which was the Health Minister of the UK. He was in contact with the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister and they are both now in quarantine. And let us be frank, all three of these persons have been vaccinated. So, what does that tell us? That tells us that the Delta variant is nothing to play with.

Madam Acting Speaker, in the US Virgin Islands the hospital is now overwhelmed.

Madam Acting Speaker, allow me to touch on something that the MP Dunkley spoke about. He said he is willing to assist us with the vaccination issue. Hmm. I find that interesting, because he was in the newspaper earlier this week almost gloating that our vaccination rate was at 60-something per cent, saying that the *Government is not doing enough. Where is their programme?*

I am so thankful for persons like MP Ianthia Simmons-Wade and all those who work in the Health Department, the DCI, for doing such a tremendous job for the last few months to not only promote the need for vaccination, to promote the need to go to your doctor, but also to facilitate the logistics of moving vac-

ination sites around this country to help bring our numbers up.

Madam Acting Speaker, let us take a little view while Mr. Dunkley gloats about our numbers saying they are not what they are supposed to be. Let us take a look around the region. In our fellow overseas territory of Montserrat, only 25 per cent of their population is vaccinated. In the British Virgin Islands only 35 per cent of their population is vaccinated. In Anguilla only 55 per cent of their population is vaccinated. In Turks and Caicos Islands only 60 per cent of their population is vaccinated. In Bermuda we are now at 67 [per cent], 65 [per cent] to 67 per cent. In Cayman Islands they are at 70 per cent. All other islands are below 40 per cent, Madam Acting Speaker.

So, what does that say? In the region, we are the second highest immunised island in the region.

The Acting Speaker: Member, can you see me?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I can. I can see you pretty good.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, thank you. I was just . . . something else was touched, thank you for that, sorry for disturbing.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And in the western hemisphere we are second only behind the Cayman Islands. So, while Mr. Dunkley and critics want to say, *You aren't doing enough*, is he really being fair to all the hard workers that have gone out to immunise?

Let us look at some realities, Madam Acting Speaker. Over the last 18 months thousands of our people have been unemployed, thousands are still unemployed now. We have taken a \$350 million hit to Minister Dickinson's pocket . . . sorry, I did not mean *his* pocket, but the government's pocket. And as MP Campbell said, all of that does not really matter because the most important number is that we have lost 33 Bermudians.

[*Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*]

Mr. Christopher Famous: But we are doing a turnaround now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, due to the strict measures of this Government, unpopular measures, but effective—vaccination rates, quarantine and SafeKey. Well, you know what I find ironic? All of these things the OBA has attacked in the last month—all of them.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: The OBA said *Do away with the travel authorisation form, just be like America, just get a negative test and allow people to come in*. Well, what is happening in America right now? Florida

is seeing record numbers. What is happening in England? They are seeing record numbers.

The OBA, via their Opposition Leader, the Honourable Cole Simons, attacked the quarantine methodology, saying, *Do away with the quarantine*. And now suddenly, when they realise that what we are doing is correct, they suddenly want to jump on board and say, *Hey, we want to help out with the vaccination rate. How can we help?* I do not know; let us go ask their members who are down in Cabinet protesting against us. You know, there are OBA members down there protesting against these measures that we are using to stop COVID-19 killing our people. So, the best way they can help is to stop pandering to conspiracy theories. That is the best way you can help, MP Dunkley.

Let us go on. The Honourable Member from constituency 22, Scott Pearman, asked what the basis of these emergency measures is. It must have a basis. I do not know, maybe we are trying to prevent lockdowns, maybe we are trying to prevent more deaths in our Island, maybe we are trying to prevent economic carnage. That may be the basis of why we are doing what we are doing.

You know what is so funny, what is a small world, Mr. Deputy Speaker? My family comes from BVI, my mother's family. And what is ironic is that my mother has a house, my mother's sister has a house in the middle of Road Town, which is their capital. And two buildings down from that house there is a building blocking my view of the water and that building is owned by a law firm and that law firm is partially owned by the family that MP Scott Pearman comes from. Well, let us ask MP Scott Pearman what is happening in the BVI when they do not have quarantine measures? Let us ask him, when the vaccination rates are low, what happens in the BVI? Because I am quite sure he will not get on the microphone and tell us the truth today.

Well, let me tell you what is happening. When you have no mandatory quarantine, people go home, and they go about their business when they should be home. And now they have had 25 people die in one month because of this. So, let us ask what are the reasons, what is the basis? Saving lives, MP Scott Pearman, that is the bottom line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me conclude. Delta is real. Delta is real! It is so real that in the Cayman Islands they are not opening their borders until October and possibly November, until their people get to 80 per cent vaccination rate. They have just had two cases of Delta come up from quarantined persons. Let us say that those persons were not quarantined. What would have happened to the Cayman Islands? Let us ask Honourable Scott Pearman, because he has an office down there as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as MP Campbell, my MP, said, odds are we are going to be back here again to extend this because we have to understand

Delta is going nowhere. There is Lambda coming up. Why? The less people are vaccinated, the more these diseases can mutate. The biologists and MP Lovitta Foggo can attest to this.

So, I say to the people of Bermuda, while the measures are unpopular, while some of you say you are not going to vote for me or anybody else again, the fact is, you are going to be alive to not vote for me. That is the fact. So, when we bring these measures, it is not because we want to be dictators, it is not because we want to see OBA and their friends down on [the] Cabinet lawn, it is because we want to save our people's lives and we want to save our economy.

So, I commend not only the Health Minister, but her staff, everyone who has been employed in this operation—the people down at the airport, the people down at Perot Post Office—the people at all the vaccination sites. And for those who have differences of opinion, well, listen, we understand you, but just understand that at times we have to have these measures.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to make sure you see my right . . . am I properly dressed, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have light blue and dark blue on.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry, I did not hear you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had an audio problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have light blue and dark blue on that represents St. George's.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the people of Bermuda.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Thank you so much.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier, you have the floor, Honourable Member.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you hear me now?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I can hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Earlier I had a live microphone and I was complimenting the Honourable Member from constituency 3, you know, she is wearing a very nice blue and blue dress today.

The Deputy Speaker: That is wonderful.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can I just please speak to the matter today?

The Deputy Speaker: Certainly.

Hon. E. David Burt: The matter today is certainly about this Public Health Emergency Extension. And I, of course, support the Minister of Health, the Acting Minister of Health the Honourable Attorney General, in this extension. I think the extension is a very simple one. It allows for the Government to implement emergency measures *should* they be necessary, and it extends it until September 30, which is after the House sits twice the next time around.

And so, I understand that certain Members want to point out the fact that, you know, *Why are we extending it? We can always recall the House if it is necessary.* But what we are trying to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to take account of everyone's time, make sure that we try to plan things out in the best way possible.

But Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quite shocked—quite shocked—to listen to the contributions of Honourable Members earlier today from the opposite side. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought, as the Honourable Member who just spoke, I would have thought that we . . . that we were . . . how would I put it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That we were all on the same side, that we all wanted to ensure that this country was kept safe. But when you listen to the pandering of which we are hearing, when you listen to the veiled remarks, as the Honourable Member who just spoke, pandering to conspiracy theories, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it, without question, is not the way and the direction that we wish to go.

And so, from my perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to say a few things. The reason why the One Bermuda Alliance is not the Government and the reason why the people of this country chose the Progressive Labour Party was due to strong leadership, because they knew this Government would take the actions required to keep them safe. That is something that is important for us to know and to recognise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And so, when I hear the Honourable Member in one breath say that we should increase our vaccination figures, while in the next breath saying that the Government should drop the measures which are actually necessary to make sure that our country can be open, I actually do not think that they understand the issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not either/or. You do not get to say, *We don't get a Public Health Emergency, we don't do vaccinations, we don't need border controls.* We know what happens when that takes place. If we want an open country, like we have mostly now, we need strong protections at our border. And if you want weaker protections at the border, that

means that you will have the need to have more restrictions here. And so, for the One Bermuda Alliance to say that they do not support us extending this extension, or they support it, but you know, just a little bit of their concern about how these things are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the powers in the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 become necessary when we have the virus spread domestically which threatens our health care system. And the way that this happens is at the border! So, to say that you do not like a strong border policy, but then say you think the Government's probably doing too much, you are talking about of both sides of your mouth. And that is not the leadership which this country needs or desires.

I heard this comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the Shadow Minister of Health, former Premier, speaking about the fact that, you know, we used to meet with the Government and we want to meet with the Government again. Well, here is the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will tell you a story. It was in April when we had a spike and the Opposition Leader reached out to ask to set up a meeting with his team, and the Government said yes, certainly, we will. Two days later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition put out a statement attacking and spreading falsehoods about a Minister of this Government.

And here is what the statement said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, (and I quote) talking about the Minister of National Security from constituency 1: ¹“[T]he special consideration they gave to SailGP athletes to train, while our local and own elite athletes, who should be able to train for the 2021 Olympics, were sidelined.” Utter nonsense and falsehoods because the Minister of National Security gave permission for our elite athletes to train.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I saw that I wrote to the Honourable Opposition Leader and I said, *You can't want to come and sing Kumbaya and let's meet together and let's work through this issue when you are going to be putting out false statements attacking Ministers in this Government.* And I said, *The meeting is cancelled.* Those are the facts.

So, I am happy to work with the Opposition and anyone else, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who wants to advance the interests of the country. But if you are going to slander hard-working Ministers of this Government with falsehoods in the public domain, trying to score political points, then you are not really interested in working together.

I can take valid criticisms of policy. That is the role of the Opposition. I can take valid criticisms when they come. But you cannot come into this Honourable House and speak out of both sides of your mouth. You either want to ensure that this country can remain open during a pandemic, when we see so many countries around us closing, or you do not. You do not get

¹ *Royal Gazette* 27 April 2021

to pick a side—I mean, you have to pick a side. You cannot play in the middle. Countries that play in the middle are going backwards. Countries that play in the middle are seeing spikes, seeing the reintroduction of curfews, seeing businesses close down. It is necessary that the leadership of the Government of this country speaks strongly because we want to keep our people safe.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to say one more thing because the Honourable Member who just spoke from constituency 11 spoke about the importance of the vaccination programme. And we heard criticism from Honourable Members opposite about the pace and the slow-down of Bermuda's vaccination programme. Here is the truth. The Honourable Member from constituency 11 said that we are second only to the Cayman Islands in this hemisphere.

Here is what is important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are the *only* Government at that level that has not required vaccinations of anyone in the country—an important point. We have left it up to people's choice. There are no differing restrictions inside the country between vaccinated and unvaccinated. The only change is at the border. But in the Cayman Islands, in the British Virgin Islands, in the Turks and Caicos Islands, do you know what they said? They said, *If you are a guest worker, you must get a shot or you must leave.* We have seen other places that have done that. That is not the direction that has been had because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are remaining consistent with our position where we have said it is a decision between you and your doctor.

And so, it is important to note when comparing jurisdictions, that in Bermuda we have not gone as far as other countries have gone. And that speaks to our programme of sharing information, of encouraging vaccinations, and the fact that we have 65 per cent of the population—total population at least one dose—and at least 75 per cent of the eligible population, speaks to how well we are doing. So, yes, it is easy to criticise, it is easy to compare. But we must keep it in context because I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Government said *We're mandating this and this action*, we know full well what we would hear from the Opposition.

So, I close with this to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you cannot talk out of both sides of your mouth on this issue. It is important that we focus on what is necessary to keep the people of this country safe and to keep our economy open. The Extension of this Public Health Emergency is necessary because if it expires on August 24 we want to make sure that until September 30 it is further extended and if there is any need to change the requirements in place, then we can do so.

But right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to note the only restrictions that exist inside this country are mask wearing indoors and, if you are

having a large group, you need to let us know so that we can ensure that public health guidelines are followed to minimise the possibility of a super-spreading event. That is where we are because of the work which we have done to keep this country safe.

So, in hearing the Shadow Minister of Health, I welcome Members of the Opposition if they wish to meet with me to discuss issues and come as honest brokers—very important. But as the Honourable Member who spoke before me from constituency 11 said, when your candidates are running around on the Cabinet Office lawn shouting and booing and hissing and doing all those types of things, it is difficult to take you seriously. So, you are either *for* the protection of this country, *for* what is necessary to keep this economy open, *for* what is necessary to ensure that students remain in schools, or you are not.

Valid criticisms of policy—welcome. But you cannot talk out of both sides of your mouth.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier Burt.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Jarion Richardson.

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Member Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and good afternoon to my colleagues and the listening audience, again.

I just wanted to follow up with some earlier comments that my colleagues had made from the Opposition benches and just reiterate some of the positives of a stakeholder engagement with the Opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I only wanted to bring up this one point and I want it to be a little bit, so I will be succinct and I will wrap it up. But I wanted to bring up that the relationship between an MP and the constituents is something quite different than the relationship between, for example, the Government and the media. And then, obviously, being a relative newcomer to your world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am the one who is learning this on a daily basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we had those earlier engagements and earlier consultations, there was some value had when we ran across constituents as we went about our day-to-day in our life and their asking us questions and we were able to reply from an informed position versus one where we were simply regurgitating whatever was released to the media.

And I found this particularly helpful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just reflecting, the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs has invited me twice to be briefed by his departments—Planning Department. And what I

found from that experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was not necessarily the value from just contributing to the debate, although that was very helpful. I found it helpful to then move around the community and have something to add, have some more colour to bring to the conversation so that when one of my constituents asked me about SDOs, it was not just what was said in the House, but, *Oh, and here is also some information that makes it out and gives further context and clarity.*

And so, with that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to make the point that stakeholder engagement . . . and I am sorry that at some point it seems that there was . . . that this relationship broke down, because inevitably a positive relationship in that space will benefit all Bermudians. But I definitely want to reiterate what my earlier colleague said, just because I am learning as a new MP, that there is a different kind of relationship between me and the constituents. And I would like to facilitate that communication arrangement and maybe by doing so that would also help Bermuda and the Government in this fight.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Richardson.

Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister Simmons.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Honourable Members for their contributions as well.

There is very little for me to say to wrap up this debate this afternoon, but I will say a few things very, very, very briefly. We have heard and seen and heard reported by the vocal minority that has advocated for their individual rights to be preserved. But what we have missed and what we never see on air is the very quiet minority that actually populates its space in a meaningful way. And I am referring to my team in the Attorney General's Chambers that has been challenged throughout this pandemic with drafting legislation, giving advice all hours at night or all hours in the morning to support the Government's policy.

So, to that end I would like to thank Brian Eaton for his work in bringing this Order; [also] Parliamentary Counsel Cathryn Balfour Swain for her tireless work along with her team; and Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel Lorraine Welch, who is also acting as my Permanent Secretary at this time; and Sakira Dill-Francois who has been in the trenches from day one to assist the Government with the other legal advisors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard from our resident historian, we have heard from MP Simmons-Wade, who is the unofficial COVID-19 coordinator for the Government who can speak to all things relevant

to our vaccine and other programmes. We have heard from the Opposition gloom and doom, positive individual rights versus the Government's view to protect our citizens. But there is one thing that I think we all can agree on today, which is the need to protect our people.

I am looking out the window from the Cabinet Office where I am sited today and I have seen a transition. And I remember the time when we presided in this Chamber with regard to matters of state and there was a ghost town view out of this window. I can look today and see the success of the Government policy because our streets are busy, our shops are populated, and our people are back to work. And so, I think this Government has done a sterling job of striking the right balance between the need to preserve the protections of our people and the need to be mindful and stimulate our economy because to do otherwise would lead to results that we have seen from time to time that we see worldwide.

So, I have great pleasure to bring what is necessary in this Order to this House for consideration because there are times when it is necessary to suspend our constitutional rights, as dreadful as that may sound, in order to achieve benefits for the greater good. And in this particular instance we are talking about maintaining the health of our citizens and our safety.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I once again thank Honourable Members for their commentary. I admire the Opposition's desire to continue to work with the Government when consulted and I reiterate my leader's message to them that the genuineness and authenticity of intention is necessary to continue that consultation.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that the said Draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor with regard to this matter.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 4) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Deputy Speaker: The third Order of business today is the Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021.

Minister Hayward, I think that is you.

You have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon, sir.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I bring to this Honourable House today the Bill entitled the Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021. This Bill amends regulation 6A of the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 with retrospective effect, and validates certain payments made under that regulation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to amend regulation 6A(1) of the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 to extend the maximum duration of a financial assistance award for an able-bodied recipient from five years to seven years. The amendment will also make the change retroactive, effective April 1, 2021, in order to validate payments made since the beginning of the 2021/22 fiscal year.

The House will recall that with that, in accordance with regulation 6A(1) of the regulations, payment of an award to an able-bodied recipient shall be limited to a maximum period of five years, whether that period is continuous or an aggregate period made up of two or more awards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House should be advised that the five-year term for some financial assistance clients expired on March 31, 2021. This Bill amends the regulations to extend the five-year term to seven years. Accordingly, a retroactive amendment to the regulations will be required to address the issue with respect to payments made since April 1, 2021. This includes 100 persons who have received payments totalling \$700,046.56.

This House will recall that the mission of the Department of Financial Assistance is to assist the vulnerable Bermudians to maintain a standard of living during challenging economic times. This cashless programme is designed to provide a financial stimulus to individuals and households as they navigate through economic hardship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as of June 2021 the total number of persons on assistance was 2,306. The largest category pertained to pensioners, 1,037; fol-

lowed by those with disabilities, 786; then persons employed with insufficient earnings, 245. The smallest category is able-bodied unemployed persons, 238, although this number continues to trend upwards monthly as a result of the current labour market conditions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would also like to take this time to remind the House that the DFA also provides the following services to eligible persons on financial assistance, that includes rent, nursing and rest home fees, food allowance, health insurance, disability service, BELCO allowance, personal home-care allowance, medical supplies and equipment, and telephone allowance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is expected that the effects of the pandemic will be felt for some time into the foreseeable future. This could not have been predicted at the time the five-year term was introduced. This Government remains committed to assisting and supporting every Bermudian, especially those who face challenges in getting back to gainful and meaningful employment. Therefore, we will continue to provide the necessary support, assistance, and resources needed to carry Bermudians through this unprecedented time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, MP Richardson.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Minister for explaining this legislation.

The Opposition supports supporting people—Bermudians—through economic tough times. It goes without saying that recent events, the pandemic, have challenged a lot of people in Bermuda and having a social safety net is a key part of being a modern society and modern democracy. So, it is important that we undertake these measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will keep my comments brief because I have a question, really for the Honourable Minister, as it relates to the financial assistance programme. And that relates to the amount of time.

We are extending the time from five to seven years and, obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pandemic has not been around for five years. So, my question is, how . . . what is this telling us? What information is . . . is it telling us . . . not about the pandemic because that is quite understandable, but about the length of time, particularly, an able-bodied person would be unable to find employment in Bermuda?

Undoubtedly there are some questions. And the Honourable Minister being a statistician, I am in-

terested in his point of view on this one. The labour and employment situation in Bermuda is, obviously, more complex than simply supply and demand. So I am raising questions about skills. I am raising questions about the Workforce Development and its training programmes. Are they successful? Are they fit for purpose? It is not enough that we know we need to support people and that we do support people, but I am curious, what are some of the contributing factors and what is the Honourable Minister proposing to do about those on a going forward basis?

That is all I have for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, again, I thank the Honourable Minister for bringing this to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Richardson.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: That is the Honourable Michael Weeks.

Mr. Weeks, you have the floor.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am delighted to be able to rise and support this Bill here by Minister Hayward. This is just another indication, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in spite of all the naysayers, what we are going through with this pandemic and the like, and how people are trying to say that the Government is not doing much, we are always in tune with our people. And this here is a perfect example that we know what is out there, we know what is happening and the Minister of Labour and his Ministry have, through Workforce Development, been doing retraining. We have closed down different work categories to make sure that Bermudians have the opportunity.

This, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is really in response to one of the questions that the prior speaker asked as to what we are doing as a Government. And I could imagine that the relevant Minister, substantive Minister, will delve more into what we are doing, but it is obvious what we are doing with the closing of work categories, retraining and training for the everyday Bermudian.

This extension, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is just to show that we know what is out there. And I personally do not want to politicise it because it is our people. So, you know, I do not want to go back and forth as to whether or not we should do it. Our people are struggling, our people are hungry, and this Government is just reacting to the needs of our people.

So, Minister, I take my hat off to you and I am glad that we are doing this here.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Weeks.

Are there any further speakers?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Honourable Member Lovitta Foggo, you have the floor.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My comments will be ever so brief.

I think MP Jarion [Richardson] sort of hit on some of where I wanted to go when he talked about having social safety nets in place. We, here in Bermuda, like other jurisdictions, are a social democracy. And given the major impact that COVID-19 has had on us, those of us who live here (and even looking worldwide) can appreciate the impact that it has had on the economic landscape. While as a Government we are challenged to ensure that we keep our financial status stable, at the same time, we are fully aware of how this pandemic has impacted our people. And we have seen various job categories be affected, retailers closing down. We look in IB and what has happened? We have seen [the effects of] operating on an online platform, continuing to work, we see the impact that this has had on workforces in that sector as well.

So, the pandemic has changed the landscape considerably. And I think as a Government being responsive to the changes that have taken place and looking at the impact that it has had on our workforce, it is the responsible thing to do in terms of trying to ensure that while our people struggle to find employment, create employment . . . because we cannot overlook the fact that this has whet the appetite for entrepreneurship as well. So while some businesses have closed, there are some of us who have been able to take advantage of the situation in the sense that with their ingenuity have been able to establish some businesses.

And so, we do not want our people having to find shelter and get food in a way that is going to add to the negative side of trying to keep food in one's mouth. We want to empower our people and provide a cushion, I guess if you will, that will keep them in good stead.

We do not have the benefit of being able to look into a crystal ball and to measure whether or not the amendments that are being brought to the table today are exactly what are needed to help us go forward. We do not have that crystal ball. However, we do have a social and moral conscience which compels us to do something to try and keep everything moving forward for the benefit of our people.

And so, while there may be those who may express concerns as to whether or not we are moving in the right direction, in situations such as this we have to err on the side that we feel is going to bring about the type of outcomes that we are looking for

down the road. And let me say this, we are a dynamic Government, and if next week things change that allow the Minister or the Government to come back and make further amendments, let us say, for instance, where things go so great we do not need to extend it for seven years, I have no doubt that the Minister would do that as well. Because we are trying to make sure that we keep everything on an even keel, as best we can, in a stable position so that we can take care of our people. And that is, as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a labour government, that is one thing that is always first and foremost in our minds, the conditions of our people and having an environment that, as best we can, allows them to be able to sustain themselves.

And so, while questions may be asked in the broader public in terms of if this is the right thing to do, we, as a responsible government have to do things in a manner that accounts for the conditions of all of our people and keeps them, if you will, in proper stead until such time that we can do even better.

And so, on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you and I thank the Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Foggo.

Are there any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Opposition Leader Cole Simons, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I concur with what has been said. Yes, it is important that we provide a social safety net for those who are challenged economically. And for those who are able-bodied, I believe that we need to give them further support if they are unemployed for five to seven years. My biggest concern is this: I would not want . . . and I am not saying it is happening, but it is my concern that a number of people may not be looking for jobs because they are comfortable with the safety net.

And so, I would like to see some type of contingency attached to the safety net so that if you are an [able-bodied person] who is willing to work, let us show that you have demonstrated that you have been looking for a job. Let us show that you have demonstrated that you have tried to retool yourself to be more marketable in the community. Let us demonstrate that you are trying to be more entrepreneurial. Because it is important that we try to empower these, I am going to say, young, able-bodied business [people] to let them feel that they are a part of Bermuda's success.

Going forward I recognise that we have had challenges with COVID-19, and we as a country will

have to probably live with COVID-19 going forward, and a consequence, if the country has to live with COVID-19, everybody else has to live with COVID-19. And so, as human capital in this country, we all must adjust accordingly to live with the new paradigm. And in regard to that adjustment, we all need to somehow prepare ourselves to be more marketable and be more useful in the economy. I mean you have heard the Premier talk about the "digital age" and the digital age in four or five years will, basically, present an economy that is vastly different from what we have today—vastly different, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, we all may have to retool ourselves.

And so, I take the view that the best social support network is a job. And I would encourage the Government to continue its work in Workforce Development, continue its work in immigration, to ensure that we can help Bermudians retool themselves—not, with the professional side of it, in some cases, retool themselves in regard to personal skills, soft skills. Because you hear many, many stories in the community and you hear them on both sides, *I have been hiring Bermudians and they come to work and their work ethic is this way.*

The latest one I heard was, *I hired a Bermudian*—and this was a Bermudian telling me this story from a small business—*I hired a Bermudian, Cole, and he [the employee] said I'm going to be late for work.*

The employer said, *I figured he was going to say to me that he got in around eleven o'clock.*

Well, the employer said that employee came in at four o'clock in the afternoon to knock-off at five o'clock, and said he was going to be "late" for work. And those are the challenges and soft skills that we need to address in this country to make it [INAUDIBLE] effectively and that we optimise the human capital that we have in this country.

So, as I said as I opened up, yes, I am supportive of extending the social net from five to seven years. But along with that should be programmes to support the training that is due, support showing evidence that this person is looking for jobs because they must take ownership of the challenges that they are facing and demonstrate that I, Cole Simons, or I, Derrick Burgess, cannot help myself by staying on social assistance for five or seven years. It becomes a dependency point of view and, as a consequence, why should I go to work when I can stay home and receive social assistance or unemployment insurance? It is only maybe \$100 difference. And I do not encourage that in this country because it does not serve the individual well. And the other issue is, if they are adults and they have young children, it can go and become generational.

So, I am supportive of this, but I would like to have some conditions attached to it in regard to training in professional skills, in soft skills, and also, evidence that an [unemployed person] is indeed looking

for a job and not too comfortable living on the social assistance. I think, as I said, the best social support network is getting a job, be it starting your own business.

And actually, that leads me to another thought. I was talking to a young man and he stopped me in the street. I did not know him from Adam. He was doing some landscaping work. And he said *Mr. Simons, you don't know me, but you see me, I'm doing some landscaping. I have had my issues with the law and I have been up into the West End for a stay and no one could tell me anything. But I have learned and I am trying to be a different person. I would really like to make a better person of myself, and to do that I am considering opening a landscaping company because I would feel fulfilled if I had my own landscaping company.*

So, I directed him to Workforce Development and I directed him to some other people that may be able to help him in that space. And he is an example of, if you do not provide the support, if you do not show that you are taking the initiative yourself, nobody will help you. And so, my point is, let us support those people who also want to help themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Simons.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister Hayward.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I would like have a few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: It is Susan Jackson.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Jackson, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you and good afternoon.

I just wanted to sort of preface my words, one, by saying that yes, absolutely, in the times of COVID-19 we are having to stretch and make sure that we are supporting those that need us the most, and that is important and I am grateful that the Government has the resources to be able to support those who are having a really difficult time with employment at this time. But the other side of it is that these . . . you know, the Minister had mentioned that we are looking at a total population of able-bodied unemployed at about a little over 200 clients. And I would suspect that less than half of them are probably close to the five-year threshold. So, I am not expecting that there would be a large number of people that are at the point where they would actually need this additional

support beyond what they are already a part of within the sort of five-year parameter.

And I am raising that [point] because of the potential emotional fallout of being unemployed for five years, unemployed for six years, unemployed for seven years. You know, I cannot imagine the wear that this would have on a person's attitude and their ability. I mean, it is tough, especially in a place like Bermuda where you see so many things around you that I would define as luxuries and, you know, being in a situation where you have a finite and very well-defined financial situation, such as being involved in being a client of Financial Assistance, is not easy. I mean, these are the bare minimums.

So, when people might say, *Oh, you know, you get used to and dependent on financial assistance.* Yes, you know, maybe. But I would imagine that most people would want more for themselves, that they would want to aspire, that they would like to travel and have some of the luxuries that they see around them on a daily basis. And so, I would suspect that most of the population of able-bodied unemployed have aspirations and would like to get out there and earn [enough] so that they can enjoy some of the benefits of having their own money to be able to spend as they like.

Which brings me to the point of, the Minister . . . well, before the Minister was the Minister, the Minister and I worked on a working group that just looked at all facets of financial assistance. And it was a real eye-opener for me because I just was not aware of the intricacies of the programme. And one of the conversations and one of the things that was discussed quite a bit and was reported in the report that was tabled in the House of Assembly back in 2018 was to see whether more able-bodied unemployed could connect with the Workforce Development and that through Workforce Development and retraining and working on life skills, that there was a good chance that we would be able to integrate those who are unemployed back into the working world. And I would be curious, if not in today's debate, at some point, just finding out how that really is working out from a statistical perspective, the number of people, able-bodied unemployed, who have engaged with Workforce Development, have gone through the programme, how many have sought and secured some form of employment and are no longer a part of financial assistance or other [programmes].

That would be an interesting piece because I am not quite sure how the performance is going with the relationship between Financial Assistance and Workforce Development. And given the fact that in 2018 there was talk about introducing programmes and making that connection, and I am quite confident that this connection was made, whether it is really working. And I am not saying that in a negative way, but everything needs to be reviewed from time to time. And if now is a good opportunity to review that, given

the fact that there are members in the financial assistance programme that are able to be employed, if they are reaching the five-year mark and now extending into the seven-year mark, then maybe we might have to start looking at another way that Workforce Development might be able to adjust or massage the programme a little to make it more effective. And if that is not the case, if Workforce Development has a solid programme and it is working really well and we still have able-bodied unemployed who are within Financial Assistance, that we may need to look at what the definition of able-bodied unemployed is.

I am saying all of that to say that it almost feels to me like the seven years is dragging people along and expecting something, and maybe that expectation is just not ever going to become a reality. And if that is the case, then, you know, I just do not feel like we should keep dragging folks along with this possibility that something is going to happen and maybe it is not.

And certainly, the idea of, you know, the taxpayer and them hearing in the newspaper that able-bodied unemployed individuals that are seeking this financial assistance from Government are getting a two-year extension, which means five years . . . you know, the perception of a taxpayer may be, *Oh, five years of some healthy, good-to-go human being sitting with their feet up, just getting a cheque for . . .* (It is cashless) *but getting the benefits of financial assistance.* And I do not think that is the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think there is something else that may be going on.

I guess my real question and plea to the Minister today is that maybe we can focus on this particular segment of Financial Assistance and really look, it might be a re-definition, it may be just a rejigging of the expectation and maybe even taking a look at how the support services that are provided may be restructured so that they can possibly be more successful in providing employment opportunities—long-term employment opportunities—for those that are able-bodied and currently clients of Financial Assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Jackson.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister Hayward, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I pause because it is very difficult having a conversation about recipients who are on financial assistance. I heard no mention of the socio-economic problems that lead some of these individuals to needing support from the Government. And unless we begin to address the root causes of why some of our people are in this condition and are

dependent on the Government, I do not think it is appropriate to even mention that we are dragging anybody along in a system. For the most part we isolate our conversation to individuals, but we do not speak about the families that these individuals support when they receive financial assistance, because financial assistance is not an individual assessment; it is actually a household assessment. So, persons get on financial assistance because it is determined that the total income within their household does not meet basic expenditure.

On September 20, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I released a Statement to say that the Government was moving forward with financial assistance reform and that it had four major goals. And number one is to increase sustainability of the financial assistance system. We want to strengthen education training, employment services for people who are on financial assistance, encourage individuals and families to be financially independent, and improve the system to better support people who are disabled. Those were the key strategic priorities. We have been working with those strategic priorities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House should be pleased to know that before the end of this session, the aim is to ensure that we table and amend the financial assistance legislation to enact part one of that reform strategy. However, I was forced to bring a separate Bill to the House today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we simply cannot wait. We are trying to supply support to individuals in a climate where we have a deteriorating economic situation.

When the global health care crisis hit our shores and we were forced to shut down the economy, over 10,000 persons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were displaced from the workforce. The majority of those individuals received social support through the unemployment benefit. Most of those people are going back to work now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But a large group of those individuals also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, find themselves displaced from the workforce, not just temporarily but now permanently. So while we only see the number of just over 200 individuals who are on financial assistance, there are over 2,000 individuals who actually collected an application. Many do not qualify based on their household circumstances. So we have many persons who need and require assistance that simply do not qualify after doing a household assessment because someone in the household may be working.

What is happening today in terms of us continuing those individuals who have been on financial assistance for five years is an acknowledgement of two things: (1) The economy is not in a place where they can readily find jobs; and (2) we have not dedicated the necessary resources—successive administrations have not dedicated the necessary resources to ensure we support those individuals. And that is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this particular administra-

tion has said that we are going to do individual support service for each able-bodied person.

So, I have spoken about personal employment programmes, assessing where one is having a vision and determining where one wants to go and working with that individual along that continuum. The old way of sending someone out to just do job searches is not effective. And I continue to hear a Member call for that today, to prove that you are looking for work. If over five years and 600 applications later, if that person has still not found employment, it means that some sort of intervention is required and that is what we are going to provide, because you, like I, know that it is fine and dandy for us to find someone a job; whether or not that person can maintain that employment is another story. And so we are going to work on employability skills, but also social supports, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The mere fact that one does not have the ability to have somebody to watch their children prohibits that individual from being productive in the workplace, and limits the jobs that they can take on. So there may be jobs available in hospitality but the hours are [such] where the person, the individual may need support to watch their children, but they do not have anybody to assist them. And so, once you get to better understand the human side of most of these recipients you can empathise with some of those struggles. [It's not just] cases of everybody kicking back and being dependent on the system and just milking it for what it is worth. That is not the reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so part of our plan is to do genuine financial assistance reform.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to ensure that work actually is beneficial so that it is not a dollar in and a dollar out. It makes no sense to have somebody work for a salary and deduct that entire salary from that individual, so it nets out where that person has no benefit from working. And so we discussed that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are going to reform that. Mothers should be able to retain some of their child support payments to provide for their children.

We have to discuss the asset level that one could have and also receive social support. This is why the supplemental unemployment benefit is also important, because now we have a lot of homeowners who also need support. And so those persons filtering into the supplemental unemployment benefit based on our current legislation are abled-bodied individuals, or those persons under 65 who are homeowners, [and they] cannot qualify for financial assistance. We have to talk about the number of children who we support through the programme and the benefits that are supported to those children, the number of individuals who receive health insurance through the Department of Financial Assistance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is, part and parcel of us being a labour government, is to ensure we have adequate social protections in place. But not

just social protections in place that are simply a measure of last resort, protections that you can fall back on and spring up from. So it is our responsibility to assist in empowering individuals so that they can become financially independent. Like I stated, there are over 100 individuals and their families who would time out of financial assistance if we did not make this amendment. So we are talking about hundreds of people who require government support who no longer would get support. But what I am doing in terms of placing personal employment plans in place and reforming financial assistance and ensuring that we empower people, should have been done on day one when that legislative change took place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When the previous Government made a decision that they were going to cap individuals on financial assistance and move to a 60-month period, it should have been accompanied with the social support services, the employment services, the mental health services and any other wraparound service that that individual needs so that they do not time out. And that is what we are doing now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ensuring that we have better placed people so that in two years' time we are not talking about this same population of individuals continuously requiring our assistance. If after two years we have done nothing and they still require our assistance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to accept as a Government that we have failed them. That is what we have to accept collectively. And so we will do all that we can to ensure that we empower individuals.

But just to talk about the magnitude of how this Government has helped individuals, we talk about over \$70 million that has been spent on unemployment benefits and supplemental unemployment benefits. We now have to talk about an additional \$47 million that we give to individuals on an annual basis on top that \$70 million. Some departments do not even get that amount of money in annual funding, some ministries. The amount of money we spent out exceeds 10 per cent of government's revenue and expenditure on an annual basis. Let's just let that sink in. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that means that over \$125 million is spent on an annual basis between continuing our social support services to directly assist the families within this country. That is no drop in the bucket. No one can accuse this Government of not caring. No one can accuse this Government of not supporting the families within this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have demonstrated our commitment through our actions. We have extended the supplemental unemployment benefit. We are now extending financial assistance. That is part of the ethos of this Progressive Labour Party Government, supporting our people when they need it the most. And I think we have demonstrated that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our caucus in the Cabinet today we have not hesitated to make these decisions. Sup-

porting our people has cost us more than the airport deal. It just goes to show you that when we have to redirect funds to other areas that each and every one of us who sit in here, our priority has to be the people of Bermuda, and not the pockets of the corporate world, or we should not be here. And we have demonstrated that when you see the level of funding that we have given directly to our people.

On a monthly basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we give just roughly around \$2 million, to just over 1,000 pensioners. We give over \$1.25 million to just under 800 individuals who have disabilities. We support roughly around 250 low-income earners. These are people who put in a hard days' work and do not receive a decent wage in return. So that is why it is important that we ensure that we have and implement a living wage, because this will reduce the assistance that those 250 low-income earners actually require on a monthly basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now we are supporting over 225 able-bodied individuals and that number is growing [every] month.

The number of people who need financial assistance is growing [each] month as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will grow because we also have an ageing population. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our unemployment rolls are not going anywhere anytime soon. So it is incumbent on us as a Government to continuously provide support for our people, and that is what we have done.

I talked about the categories that we provide services for, but the largest expenditure area on a monthly basis is rent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We talk about rent on a transactional term. But how about we talk about it in terms of substituting rent, where we provide \$1.3 million in funding for *housing* people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Everybody should be entitled to that basic need. The majority of money that we spend as it pertains to financial assistance is to satisfy somebody's basic need for housing; somebody's basic need for food; ensuring that people's utilities are on; ensuring that people have access to health insurance. It can never be viewed as us dragging people along. This is keeping people afloat; because without the support that the Government provides, I am going to tell you the third sector, the charities of this Island, do not have the capacity to substitute the funding that Government is providing for families within this country. And even though you say, *Well, look, Salvation Army does a lot with housing*. Mr. Deputy Speaker, who provides their grant funding for that housing to continue on an annual basis? It is this Government.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that Bermuda is fully cognisant and when persons need assistance this Government has continuously demonstrated that we are able to provide that assistance. With that said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill now be committed.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Bill will be sent to Committee. I call upon the Acting Deputy Speaker, Ms. Foggo.
Ms. Foggo.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

House in Committee at 4:19 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021](#).

I call on Minister Hayward to proceed. You have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, this Bill amends regulation 6A of the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 with retrospective effect, and validates certain payments made under that regulation.

Madam Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Minister continue with clauses 1 and 2.

Any objections to that?

There being none, continue, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I move clause 1.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 subsection (1) amends regulation 6A(1) of the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004, to extend the maximum duration of a financial assistance award for an able-bodied recipient from five years to seven years. Subsection (2) deems the amendment to have come into operation on 31 March 2021 and validates awards that have been made after that date and before the commencement of this Act.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

The Minister has moved both clauses 1 and 2.

Do any other persons wish to speak on those clauses?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Is that Member Jackson?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, it is.

The Chairman: Okay, Member Jackson, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

I am just wondering if the Minister might be able to explain why it is being backdated to the 31st of March and why we have waited so long to introduce this at the end of July?

The Chairman: Are there any others who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Madam Chairman, MP Richardson.

The Chairman: MP Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I have a query for the Honourable Minister. I have a question. How many awards . . . or what is the value of the awards that have been . . . the value of the funds that have been awarded since March 31, and how many beneficiaries did those awards go to? Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member have any other questions as it pertains to clauses 1 and 2?

There being no other Member, Minister, you may respond.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, the Bill will come into operation on the 31st of March 2021 and that is to validate payments that have been made since then. The Government made a decision that we simply could not discontinue the payments for those recipients while we were in the process of drafting legislation and so we thought that once we drafted the legislation we would put a provision in place to validate those payments that were actually made.

Madam Chairman, the records indicate that over . . . that 100 individuals have been paid who would have timed [out] of the system from the end of March 2021 and the total value of the grants provided to those individuals is roughly \$700,000.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2.

There being no other Members, Minister, I ask that you move the preamble.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I now move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: The Minister has moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections?

No. The preamble is approved.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: The Minister has moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There being none, the Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: I call on Mr. Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

House resumed at 4:25 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Foggo, Acting Deputy Speaker.

Honourable Members, are there any objections to the Bill being approved?

There appear to be none. The Bill is approved.

Order No. 4 is being carried over. And so we can have the third readings now.

Any third readings? Just you, Minister Hayward, your third reading.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I move that Standing Order be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Financial Assistance Extension *[sic]* and Validation Act 2021 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I could just correct that title, please?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please.

Hon. Jason Hayward: It is actually the Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021 to be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to the Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021 being approved?

There appear to be none; approved.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

BILL

THIRD READING

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

The Bill is passed.

[Motion carried: The Financial Assistance Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Deputy Speaker: I have an indulgence [request] from the Premier. I ask for the House's indulgence for the Premier to read this Statement.

Any objections to that?

Mr. Premier.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE PREMIER

SUPERVISED QUARANTINE—MOVING BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the indulgence of the House and for your permission to make this Statement at this time.

Honourable Members will by now be aware of the judgment of the Chief Justice handed down earlier today. The [court dismissed all claims by the applicants](#) and determined that the Government's policy as set out in the Quarantine Order most recently made

by the Honourable Minister of Health is lawful and not a breach of section 11 of the Bermuda Constitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we often confer on peaceful protest the description of "democracy in action." That is an accurate description, but it bears remembering that another cornerstone of democratic societies is the rule of law and the ability of ordinary citizens to seek justice in the courts. In this case, citizens of this Island expressed that democratic right in a fair, transparent review of the evidence and the court has made a determination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whilst the applicants may not have been successful it is democracy that has emerged the victor. The Government's case met the required tests and the evidence provided in support of the actions taken to keep this country safe has satisfied the supreme court of Bermuda of its foundation in Bermuda law and the Bermuda Constitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the determination of this matter in the courts now provides the opportunity for the Government to continue to revise policies that meet the public health situation presented in this period of the pandemic and reflect the success of our vaccination programme. Mr. Deputy Speaker, governance during a once-in-a-century pandemic is challenging, and policymakers must be nimble to adapt to changing circumstances.

In the three months since the Government's quarantine policy was first announced, Bermuda is in a different situation. Three months ago we were in the midst of a third wave which took 21 persons from us, and the Government was required to implement strong action to break chains of transmission. Three months ago schools, nurseries, restaurants, gyms, beauty salons, barber shops, movie theatres were all closed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, three months later, Bermuda is open. Our balanced polices, which have been confirmed by the courts as lawful, again see us being the envy of the world. Our airlines are full, our hotels are employing people, our local economy is rebounding, and a vast majority of the people are following the laws that have been judged by our court as constitutional and judged by our country's pandemic performance as effective.

Most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, three months ago, just 37 per cent of the population were full immunised. Today that number stands at just under 65 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bermuda is one of the few countries that does not require vaccinations in any circumstances. Many of our fellow Overseas Territories have required work permit holders to be vaccinated. Not Bermuda! We have remained consistent with the message that vaccination is a personal choice between the individual and their doctor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud of the progress that we have made and proud of our persistence in sticking to the principle of leaving vaccinations up to the individual to choose. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one likes to limit rights and freedoms of

the individuals. It is the last thing that a government wishes to do. However, as we have seen time and time again, and as we are seeing now around the world, governments that do not take the virus seriously end up worse off with more restrictions, a weaker economy, more suffering of people, and increased death.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now that the judgment has been rendered, I am able to advise Honourable Members and the public that as we approach 65 per cent of the total population being fully immunised, there will be revisions to the approach to the policy on supervised quarantine. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my expectation that as soon as next week we will be positioned to announce these changes, setting out clearly how we can pivot on the basis of the success of our vaccination programme and the effectiveness achieved in mitigating the risk against dangerous variants entering the Bermuda population. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these changes will address adjustments that can be made immediately, changes that will come into place when we reach 65 per cent of our population being immunised, and, most importantly, what the supervised quarantine regime will look like when 70 per cent of the population are immunised or when the current Quarantine Order expires on September 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the feedback that the Government has received from Members of my parliamentary caucus, members of the public, and those persons who have given reasoned and thoughtful feedback in a respectful fashion that is befitting our democracy. I am confident that the roadmap that we will share will address some valid concerns that have been raised and will be appropriate to ensure that as our vaccination rates rise, our policies are suitably adjusted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, I am bound to express my thanks to Queen's Counsel, Mr. Delroy Duncan, and his team who lead the Government's case; the Deputy Solicitor General, Ms. Shakira Dill-Francois; the Honourable Minister of Health; the Chief Medical Officer; the Chief Strategy Officer, the Permanent Secretary of Health; Dr. Carika Weldon and Dr. Joanna Peden for their invaluable expert evidence provided to assist the court.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an important case. The precedent it sets will no doubt be cited for many years and in many courts. Bermuda is fortunate to have a judicial system that can determine complex and sensitive cases in a timely manner. This case is now over. The Government's policy has been tested and has withstood that challenge. Now, as a country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must move forward in the spirit of collective unity of purpose that is required for our Island home to move beyond this pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier David Burt, for the Statement.

Mr. Burt, will you move us to motion to adjourn?

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, September 10. I do know, I think, someone wants to speak on the motion to adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: Looks like I see Mr. Tyrrell.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes. Can you hear me?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I hear you very well.

MISUSE OF PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE ON MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion to adjourn this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the annual Cup Match holidays coming up next week I had intended speaking to the historical relevance and significance of the two days, that is Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day. I had even expected to thank Somerset Cricket Club for agreeing to come to St. George's next week, bringing the Cup and hopefully leaving it. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to change my tack. Having witnessed what I describe as a display of poor and irresponsible politics during the motion to adjourn at our last sitting, which was, in my opinion, an attempt to score points and sensationalise a project going on at the NSC [National Sports Centre].

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before anyone from the Opposition rises up on me with a point of order, I declare my interest in the matter. For context, I will also caption my comments today with the following quote: *Honourable Member, were you taken in hook, line and sinker?*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make my first declaration of interest. I am the most recent past chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NSC, one year this month, having served three years prior to that. With that background, I feel I can comfortably state that I reasonably understand and know a little bit of how the NSC energy project was progressed and how it reached its present stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last week Friday, on two separate occasions, and I only thought about the second one later on, an Honourable Member from the Opposition delivered to the public, in my opinion, comments not supported by evidence on the NSC energy project. The first time, as I said, that he did this was at a press conference held under the banner of the OBA. The second time and what distressed me most was when the Honourable Member rose on the

floor of the House during the motion to adjourn using a privileged position to again spout his unsubstantiated comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not referring to just any Honourable Member with limited experience in these Chambers. I am referring to a seasoned Honourable Member who at one time, although briefly, held the positions of leader of his party, leader of the then Government and Premier of Bermuda—all very powerful positions in Bermuda. So I am not talking about a rookie Honourable Member. It was an Honourable Member who fully understood the protected privileged position while speaking on the floor of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no issue with his ability to present on either occasion because that is what freedom of speech is about. However, his unsubstantiated comments made him come across as a bully, which is not surprising with some of the previous performances that we have seen from him on the floor of the House. And to top it off, it came across as one who had not done his homework on the subject matter. Further to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Honourable Member also appeared to have done was to take on face value the words of what I would describe as a disgruntled former trustee recently resigned from the Board of the NSC.

Now, for the second time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will declare my interest. It becomes a little painful though for me to have to do this, but I will do it. It is common knowledge that we as Honourable Members in these Chambers do get protection on that which we say on the floor of the House. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would imagine, and you can correct me if I am wrong, but privileged protection comes with us speaking factually, supported by evidence. I will move on.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is just my opinion that Honourable Member Cannonier having released not only unsubstantiated comments may have stepped over the line when he called out two names of persons associated with the NSC energy project, one being an Honourable Member of this House, who actually later on in that same motion to adjourn took the opportunity to respond and clarify those unsubstantiated comments made by the Honourable Member Cannonier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know I may be taking a while to get to what brings me some real distress by that Honourable Minister comments, but I needed to set the stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my opinion that the former powerful Honourable Member went extremely low in naming a private member of this community who is a senior member on staff at the National Sports Centre. A senior Member who up to this date has been a responsible employee with many years of good service, a star in his own right who is looked up to by not only his colleagues at the National Sports Centre, his employer, the Ministry responsible for

Sport, but also contractors, vendors and clients, all associated with the use of the facilities at the National Sports Centre. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that private individual, as stated, is an employee at the NSC, was the other person called out during those unsubstantiated comments by the Honourable Member, an individual who does not enjoy the protected House privilege of being able to respond.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it has not already been figured out, the private individual maligned by the Honourable Member is my blood. My ride or die. My favourite son, and for those who know me, he is my only son, but the favourite son. And it is on his behalf that I speak today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me bring this to a close because as I said it is really painful for me to have to do this. I really could care less that the Honourable Member Cannonier, firstly, failed to do his homework. And secondly, based his unsubstantiated comments on documents he received that also fail to show the accuracy of the progression of the energy project at the NSC.

What I do care about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the public humiliation caused to my favourite son, a young man with a family of his own and a wider family who loves him, whose reputation today has been nothing short of sterling in all matters undertaken by him in this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, just like all of us here in this House, reputation is what we all will be judged on, reputation and performance. So I state that this was a needless tarnish on another young man's reputation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have made my point. I got it off my chest. I will now leave it to the Honourable Opposition Member to reflect on his actions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I take my seat, let me take this opportunity to wish yourself and all other Honourable Members regardless of whatever team they support, a good holiday break. And to all of Bermuda a safe and enjoyable Cup Match holiday. And finally, of course, all the best to St. George's Cup Match team.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Tyrrell.
Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: It sounds like Mr. Famous.

MISUSE OF PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE ON MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to start off where my honourable cousin [last] spoke about. His ride or die. His favourite son . . . that we know about. And I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that we go at each other ("each other" meaning as MPs), one side against the other.

Sometimes we go at each other, you know, in our individual caucuses. That is par for the course. Someone once said, *This is not a Sunday school. This is a construction site*. So, going after each other is what we do. Sometimes we go at each other with facts, sometimes we go at each other with hyperbole, and sometimes we just go at each other just because.

But what we do not do is go after each other's families. We do not go after each other's wives or husbands or significant others. And we do not go after each other's children. But what I heard last week was an Honourable Member—nine years in the House, so he should know the rules—going after a member of the public who happens to be the child of another Honourable Member, with the most salacious accusations, unfounded, unsubstantiated. In some places he could be sued for what he said, but he hid behind privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to stay long because my honourable cousin who has a silky tongue laid it out very, very well. I am not so privileged to have a silky tongue. So let me end this part with this. That person who the Honourable Member Canonier went after, is my cousin. He is the first grandson of Charles "Boo" Brown. So, what I am telling that Honourable Member is that this family will not stand for any attacks on any members of our family any day—never!

CUP MATCH—HISTORY OF THE FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

Mr. Christopher Famous: Let me move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to something a little bit more cheerful. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know how you love history, and you know how many people love history. So yesterday we were treated to a history lesson by an elder in the community, Mrs. Joy Wilson-Tucker. She taught us the history of the Friendly Societies and the history of the beginning of Cup Match.

For those who don't know, the Friendly Societies were formed by Black men, originally, to help put Black people in a better position after emancipation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that when we were freed the white man left us with nothing. They got money from England and we got zero. No schools. No churches. No homes. Nothing. As the Colonel would say, *Not one dicky bird*. So Friendly Societies spread throughout the Island were formed where people went and took care of each other. They took care of the sick. They helped people put their children through school. They helped people build homes. And they built clubs; two of the clubs, one in St. George's and one in Somerset.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the original cricket games that took place during this time of the year were held between the Friendly Societies. In actuality, there were three different days: One in June, one in July and one in August, and whoever won the most

games was the winner. Moving forward, there was a game between a lodge in St. George's, Lodge 899, and a lodge in Somerset, Lodge 1026. And this was the start of what we know as Cup Match. And what other people do not know is that the colours that each team has was based off of lodge colours. Red and blue was for a specific lodge in Somerset. Navy blue and baby blue was for a specific lodge in St. George's.

Another day I will tell what these colours actually mean, but I just wanted to . . . it is important for people to understand the origins of Cup Match came out of not who could spend the most money, who would get the most drunk, but Black people helping each other when white man gave us nothing. Let me move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MARY PRINCE DAY/EMANCIPATION

Mr. Christopher Famous: Last week you spoke about emancipation. Is that correct, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And you said, *We are not free*. Correct, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I have to concur with you. But before I concur with you, let me move on to something.

Last year then Minister Foggo took the bold step and took away the name Sir George Somers out of our emancipation and gave us Mary Prince Day. So I want to again thank her for being bold. I want to thank her and her committee for putting Mary Prince Park in Devonshire, the parish in which Mary Prince was born.

I also want to put something out here. The Mary Prince tours are being sold out. They are sold out. And they also need benches down at Mary Prince Park. So, if she can pull the ear of the Minister of Works and Engineering, or the acting Minister, and get some benches down at Mary Prince Park the people of Devonshire and those visiting us will be eternally grateful.

So let me move on to your thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our thing. We are not free. Mr. Deputy Speaker, three weeks ago, as you know, I was in BVI. While I was there I was observing, not just the lack of COVID-19 protocol that was putting the country in danger, but guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? There was a commission of inquiry going on. Yes! Three gentlemen from England who do not have any ties to the BVI were down there interrogating the people of BVI. Two of them were practicing lawyers. Coming down there and having a commission of inquiry and they hadn't even applied to pass the BVI bar exam. Think about that.

They were painting every single politician down there as corrupt. *Oh, you gave a contract to Derrick. Oh, you gave a contract to John. Oh, you gave a contract to so-and-so*. Well, on an island of only 30,000 people, who else are you going to give contracts to but the people of that island? I saw the similarity of what certain people in our party went

through. *You gave a contract to so-and-so. They have got the same last name as that person. That's corruption.* So help me out here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you cannot give contracts to people you know who are qualified for the job, who should you give contracts to? People who are not qualified, or people you don't know? Because I remember the OBA gave a contract for some outrageous amount of money to someone to build an island for \$35 million. That was never called corruption—a no-bid contract.

I wish MP Zane De Silva was here to clarify because I am quite sure he never saw a tender for that.

My point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: We are not free. We often equate ourselves as Bermudians as we are different from the islands. Well, guess what. In 2010, the British went down [to Turks and Caicos] and painted every politician as corrupt and dissolved part of their Constitution and imposed direct rule. In 2021, [just] 10 years later, they are now in the British Virgin Islands doing the same thing with a wider brush. Painting every politician, no matter what side of the fence they are on with the same brush. *You are corrupt. You gave a contract to your cousin.* Well, in a population of only 30,000 where 10,000 people are relatives, it is almost impossible not to give a contract to somebody you know.

Oh, sorry, you should have called someone from England and gave them the contract. Then it would not be corruption.

So I say to the people of Bermuda, 2010 [it was] Turks and Caicos, in 2021 it's BVI. How long before they attempt to say, *There is corruption in Bermuda and we need a commission of inquiry?* Oh! My bad, they did that already!

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: When are they going to come back and do it again? Be careful, Bermuda.

POLITICIANS: POPULISM VERSUS REALISM

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am going to move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am going to close with this. There are two terms: Populism and realism. There are politicians all around the world who like to say things that are popular to try to sound good to a certain segment, to try to appeal to the emotions of people, to try to say, *Hey, all Bermudians are supposed to be working.* But they ain't going to say, *Some Bermudians need to learn to do their job,* because that is not popular.

They are going to say, *Hey, all Bermudians need to be on financial assistance.* But they are upset when we say, *Hey, people on financial assistance need to learn how to budget.*

They say, *Hey, all Bermudians should have a good education.* But they are upset when education reform takes place. They just want to be popular but

they do not do their homework and tell the people the real story. Prime example: Honourable Member Michael Dunkley wanted to be popular. *Hey, let's get rid of the TA form.* He did not do his homework and realise that every country has a TA form.

Opposition Leader Cole Simons, *Hey, let's get rid of quarantines.* He did not do his homework and realise without mandatory quarantines people are going to break the rules and you will have outbreaks in your country. I say this—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Oh, really?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have indicated that we would—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, you have to call a point of order.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I'm sorry. I said a point of order, misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My point was that we would prefer to have the quarantine at home. I never, ever said to dismiss quarantine.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I said mandatory quarantine. Are you listening?

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Mr. Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Home quarantine does not work. Go to BVI and look at the morgue and they will tell you that home quarantine does not work. Home quarantine did not work in Bermuda in March. We have 21 deaths to show for that. So, continue to try to be popular, Mr. Opposition Leader. The facts show that you were wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this to the young Members, to the Members my age and the older Members. Yes, to get elected or re-elected you need people to vote for you so that means that they have to be on your side. But in between that, you have to be firm and stand up to the people and tell them the truth. Do not just look for the easy way out because, *Hey, people are protesting. Let's go send some of our candidates down there so it looks like we are supporting them.* No! You can't be on two sides of the fence! You cannot say, *Yes, you want to help with the vaccination, but no we don't agree with quarantine.* You cannot do that!

And I say this to all of the politicians, it is very easy to get up and say something in the motion to adjourn. It is very easy to send something to the media. But it ain't so easy to actually be a real leader.

So with that Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see what I have on?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am going to go one step further than my cousin with the silky tongue. I *know* St. George's is going to win the Cup Match this year because in the history of Cup Match there has only been one team that has ever said, *Hey, we don't want to play Cup Match!* And that was not St. George's. So, to my people down in St. George's, the long-suffering people, our drought is over! This is our time. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Mr. Famous.

Are there any further speakers?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, is that you?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier. You have the floor.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I am just trying to get my video on here.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And good evening colleagues. I am actually quite interested in some of the comments that have already been made concerning the National Sports Centre and the questions that I had been asking. And I listened very intently to two speakers coming, I assume, to the defence of certain individuals.

I want to be very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have not called anyone out in specifics. I have simply asked questions based on the facts that I do have in front of me. I was asked to forward those facts on. I have forwarded those facts on. To date, I have not received any answers to the nine questions that I put forward, nor the questions that I asked in the House of Assembly during the motion to adjourn. And that is fine if we are not going to have any answers forthcoming. But it is interesting to hear one Member—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, let me pause for a second. The Speaker has received the information that he requested and I would urge you to take this up when the Speaker returns.

And if I could urge the rest of the speakers, if you can stay away from the NSC until the Speaker returns in the next sitting.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is unfortunate because two speakers have already talked about it and I need to respond to it based on the comments that they have already made concerning this particular matter.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Deputy Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order, Mr. Famous?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: I never spoke about that issue. I just said that he would never get away with attacking our family members.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: That is speaking of the issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr. Cannonier, I know Mr. Tyrrell spoke, and he spoke properly. I had no problem with him defending his family member because his name was called. I don't think he went out any further than that. And I would urge you to stay clear of that until the Honourable Speaker gets back. I am sure he will analyse what has been sent and he will take it further, if necessary.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if an Honourable Member is speaking to this particular subject and says that the facts were not in order or these were not the facts, then I need to speak to that particular matter. There is no way in the motion to adjourn that a Member can get up and speak to the subject matter—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier! Stop right there.

Mr. Cannonier, I have made the decision. I am asking you and the rest of the Members to stay away from that. The Speaker has received information that he requested from you. He is not here.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Why would he—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier. I just learned that after the previous two speakers.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Quite frankly, that is not fair and equitable in the House of Assembly where Members can get up and speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier. Mr. Cannonier!

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: It is unbelievable.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier! You heard what I said. Now, please do not question the Speaker. I am asking you to leave it alone. I will have no more of that. Now, if you go there, then it will be an early night for you.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can't believe that we are in the House of Assembly discussing a matter that two Members have spoken to whether directly or indirectly and I cannot defend the position that we have. That can't be right.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier. This is the last time I will tell you. I have told you that the Speaker has the requested information. He is not here today. I just learned that.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking a question. Two Members have spoken and you have allowed two Members to speak to a matter without the Opposition being able to speak to the matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, you started it last week. And—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: [INAUDIBLE]—

The Deputy Speaker: —Mr. Cannonier, I am not—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: [INAUDIBLE] I have the right in the motion to adjourn to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, you have the right to speak. I made the ruling. Let's move forward, please. We are not going to discuss that.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me ask this question then. For the comment that was made about that we should not be attacking anyone's children. Is that fair for me to respond to?

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, I am not going back and forward with you. I made the ruling.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: It is a wrong ruling! This cannot be—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier! This is the last time—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: —[INAUDIBLE] Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, I will not tolerate this behaviour. I will ask you to move forward.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: [INAUDIBLE] fairness, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, this is it. Move on please.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: We will take note of that and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this cannot be the right decision. We will take it up with the Speaker for sure. But I know that we will not be back in the House until September—until September! And we know that because of this issue there are many unanswered questions. So it cannot be a place where I cannot ask questions as well. And that I cannot—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier. Mr. Cannonier. This is the last time I will speak to you about this, you know. I am asking you to move on.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: This is my subject. No one else will need to move on. The motion to adjourn was made. Two Members have spoken and I—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Cannonier, leave the Chambers, please.
Leave the Chambers.

[Mr. L. Craig Cannonier left the Chamber at 5:04 pm (Standing Order 10(5))]

The Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers? Are there any further speakers on the motion to adjourn?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I happy to close but I do not know if other Members wish to speak.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear the Honourable Member Michael Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not speak to the subject that you prohibited my honourable colleague from speaking to.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Dunkley.

NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE CONTRACT

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: But what I do want to speak to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that Honourable Members spoke to a subject that my colleague had referred to and took personal attacks on my colleague.

One of those Honourable Members called him a “bully.” Craig Cannonier has never been a bully in his life, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Craig Cannonier is one of the nicest persons you will ever meet. And that comment was inappropriate to make at the time. And two things bother me about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker: (1) The comment was inappropriate because anyone who knows the Honourable Member Craig Cannonier, who knows of him or his family, knows that that is the furthest thing from the truth. (2) I think Honourable Members took that approach because they wanted to distract from the real question at hand. You have prohibited speaking to that, and I will certainly follow that ruling, although I believe that we should have the opportunity to speak to it. But I will follow that ruling and hopefully when we come back in September the Speaker will allow this matter to be progressed. But I am sure that it can be progressed outside of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the Speaker will let this matter carry on when he returns.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Well, I would hope so but it has to be answered sooner than that because questions remain and the questions remaining cannot be sideshowed by the fact that two individuals attacked the Honourable Member and he cannot defend himself.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order, Mr. Famous?

There is a point of order, Mr. Dunkley.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: I did not attack any Honourable Member. I simply said that Honourable Member needs to desist from attacking anyone outside of these Chambers and my family. Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I appreciate his intent for the point of order I think it was not appropriate because the fact of the matter is that it was a veiled threat when he said, *Don't attack members of my family.*

Honourable Members in the Opposition are free to ask questions how they choose. The Honourable Member Cannonier and former Premier of this country put together a well-presented piece last week. It was fair, it was balanced. He asked questions.

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

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Since that time—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, there is a point of order.

Mr. Premier.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House to say that it was fair and complete because it was discussed last week that issues that were raised on the floor of the House were false. I accept your ruling. But I think it is also important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which you may not know, is that the Opposition has asked questions on this very matter in the other place in the correct fashion. And that should be noted. And those questions will be answered on Wednesday when the other place meets because the questions were asked as per the Standing Orders if answers want to be received. I just wanted to let that be known, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Mr. Dunkley, carry on.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I appreciate the Premier's interjection in this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are two things I want to say. I stand by what my honourable colleague said and, secondly, we had to ask in the other place because we did not have the time frame to ask in this Honourable House or we would have.

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

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order, Mr. Dunkley.

Honourable Premier.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. This issue was first raised more than four weeks ago by the Members of the Opposition and they had adequate time to put down questions if they so wished to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Carry on, Mr. Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Honourable Premier is free to decide which way his colleagues want to speak, but if an honourable colleague of mine wanted to speak on the motion to adjourn they are entitled to speak on the motion to adjourn. The best thing the Government could do would be to have an open inquiry into what took place, because valid questions have been asked about this. And that is all I will say

about this subject because you do not wish it to be discussed and I will leave it alone, respecting your wish.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: But I think the Government needs to appreciate and understand that this matter is not going anywhere. The Opposition while we might only be six in the House and three in the other place, we will continue to question, we will continue to support, and we will continue to do our job to make sure that we represent the views of the people and the people get a full airing of issues. Sometime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it feels like because the Government has got 30 Members in the House, and five in the other place, that they think that they can shout loud from the rooftop and—

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, can I just respectfully ask you to pause?

Mr. Dunkley, I was not here last week. I had to leave early to go to a funeral. I was not privy to the comments that were made. I have been told after these two speakers who spoke first that the Speaker requested some information and he received it. So I do not think it would be fair that I entertain this since I know nothing about it. The Speaker has asked for something. He has got it. And I think it would be appropriate that he deal with it upon his return. So unfortunately it is September, but that is what it is.

I am not trying to stifle your debate, but if I am going to entertain this here I think I should be familiar with it, and I am not at this point.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, condolences on the funeral that you attended last week.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I accept—

[No audio]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: [INAUDIBLE] my colleagues have already done that. I have moved on from there.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I have moved on from there. The point I am making now, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

[No audio]

The Deputy Speaker: You are not coming through, Mr. Dunkley. You are breaking up. Mr. Dunkley, we cannot hear you. You have gone mute. I think you

have got some problems with your . . . Turn off your video, Mr. Dunkley. It might be better. I hear you now. Continue.

[No audio]

The Deputy Speaker: You are still . . .

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Am I [INAUDIBLE].

The Deputy Speaker: No. It is still not working. Turn your video off and see if that helps. Your camera off.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Is that any better?

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I am still not getting you. It is breaking up. No, I . . . I still can't hear you. I see your mouth moving, but I can't hear you.

Do you have your camera off? No, you don't have it off. Turn your camera off and see if that is any better.

You have not turned it . . . try now, Mr. Dunkley.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Is that any better, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The camera is off.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I hear you now.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: All right. I will leave the camera off while I finish what I have to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the challenges of democracy . . . how much time do I have left?

The Deputy Speaker: You have got . . . you have only used up seven minutes.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS HAVE A RIGHT TO SPEAK

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay. Thank you.

One of the challenges of democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that elections have consequences. And out of those consequences you need to move forward with the Government that is elected and the Opposition that is duly elected as well.

In October 2020, the PLP had a resounding victory. And tonight I am not interested in getting into

the politics around the election. I just want to make it very clear for colleagues who are in the House and those who are listening on the radio that while the Opposition might be small in numbers, we will never be afraid to stand up for the people that we serve. The Government does have significant numbers on the benches. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, half of them do not even have to show up to the House of Assembly and they still can be comfortable in every piece of legislation that they pass.

The Government, the Premier and Cabinet Members can make poor decisions that backbenches do not support but in reality, they do not need the backbench support because the numbers are so deep and strong in that regard.

The people of Bermuda should be assured that we as the Opposition will continue to fight on their behalf. We will continue to listen to what they have to say. And we will support the Government as has been done quite often through today. But we will not be afraid to be critical. And that is what is happening with this issue with the National Sports Centre. And that is what has happened with other issues as we have gone through this pandemic period.

And for the Government to come back and try to attack us . . . let us be very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will continue to listen to the people, speak to the issues and not be bullied into any attacks from a Government that has a huge majority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very clear, as I said earlier in the debate, and I won't reflect on that debate, but it is very clear that the mood of this country right now is one of frustration. The mood of this country right now is one of being agitated. The mood of this country right now is one of lacking confidence and being very questionable about where we stand and where we are going. And while the Government wants to paint a picture that we are moving forward to a better place, many people do not buy into that.

And you hear Members of the [Government] talk about being popular or dealing with reality, those are nice conversation pieces to have. But as we all circulate in the community it is very clear to me by people who speak to me now who never really wanted to talk politics, now want to talk because they are very concerned about the future and they are very disappointed in some of the things that are taking place in this country. And I am not going to use the motion to adjourn to get into specifics on these policies because I do not have enough time. And frankly, I have done it on a number of occasions and I will do it again in the future.

But what I am doing is, the Government needs to do a better job of listening to what the people have said. Because like somebody told me just yesterday, it appears that the Government now is tone deaf. Now, I understand that it is very difficult because I had the responsibilities of the Premier of this country. And I understand if you try to please everybody, you

are in deep trouble. You will not please anybody and you will not move the country forward. I understand that. But the challenges we face now call for better communication from the Government about these issues. It does not come from cross-communication. It comes from better communication.

And I realise that it has been a very stressful period for the past 16, 17 months as we have fought the pandemic, and many people have worked day and night, seven days a week, and have never taken a day off. And those people, including our elected Members, should be thanked for what they have to do. But the strong will survive and we are not out on the other side of this pandemic yet. And so while the Government might have mighty numbers from the election, and some people might question where their vote went, the Government needs to appreciate and realise that the small Opposition will continue to stand up and speak.

And they should not dismiss us without listening to the message because we are speaking on behalf of the people. More and more people are reaching out to us. So when I hear comments like, *Well, Opposition Members were down on the Cabinet grounds protesting and saying things* (I am adlibbing now) *that were discourteous* . . . well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the history of protest on the Cabinet lawns or on the Sessions House grounds, tell me when Opposition Members have not been in those protests?

That statement just made no sense. And it was trying to incite that those people did not have a right to be there. Of course those people have a right to be there. I do not care if they are not a member of any political party. They have a right to be there and a right to be heard. And so we should not try to demean or belittle individuals for what they are doing.

The PLP when they were the Opposition, they encouraged that. They lauded that. Man, I think they even set up a separate campaign with the People's Campaign which has disappeared now. So we need to understand and respect the people's rights in a democratic country such as we live in, to do what they have to do—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not demean what they are bringing to the table.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, there is a point of order.

What is your point of order, Mr. Famous?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: I only referred to the two OBA candidates who were down there protesting. I did not talk about anyone else.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dunkley, carry on.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the Honourable Member himself I think needs to reflect back on when the shoe might have been on the other foot on other occasions.

But we do not need to debate that. My point is simple. Everyone has a right to be heard and to be seen on these issues. And I know that people's nerves are frayed because we have gone through this for an extended period of time now, but we need to be a little bit more understanding and realise that the pressure valves are probably at a higher level now in most people. And we can work through this together, but people need to accept the criticism and not come back with personal attacks but look at it in the vein of *Well, could we do better?* I think we all know that we can do better than what we are doing.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do break for about two months. I do not think it is going to be an easy two months because we still have challenges facing us. And in spite of the optimistic forecast, the Government will take we still have significant challenges opening up the economy. We still have significant challenges in the hospitality industry because of the lack of people wanting to work in that industry and that was discussed briefly during the debate today. We still have significant challenges because our transport ambassadors are not working at full throttle, and so we need to understand that criticism is not meant for game. It is meant so we can all push forward.

Politicians in the House of Assembly all got elected in their own right. They have that right to speak. Just like my honourable colleague from constituency 12. He has the right to speak, and he spoke very well last week on that issue. And he will speak to it again. It is sad when another Honourable Member will call him a bully. That is absolutely disgraceful and—

An Hon. Member: And I accept that.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The Honourable Member who made that comment might have done it because he was a bit upset because his family was involved. But it still does not make it right, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I speak tonight on two clear points. I will support my colleague in his right to speak, and secondly that the Government is not perfect. They have made a number of mistakes. And we will balance our criticism in an appropriate way so the message gets heard and hopefully we can move forward together.

CUP MATCH—SAFETY REMINDERS

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish you and colleagues in the House of Assembly and the people of Bermuda an enjoyable Cup Match holiday. I am sure it will be much more difficult and different from previous Cup Matches and when we get to a week's time, I am sure there will be a lot of St. George's supporters, but this time in a week, we will be wondering what happened. And some of them might have to retract some of the very confident statements they have been making over the past couple of hours and over the past couple of days. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I wind down, I was in Zoom parliament in my office earlier today and the girl said, *Make sure before you come out of your office, you let us know.*

And I thought, *That's strange. They won't let the boss come out of the office.* Well, unfortunately, when I came out of the office it was a sea of blue and blue. And I almost had to call in sick for the rest of the day because I could not walk through the office when it looked blue and blue. But I appreciate the . . . certainly the competitive spirit of Cup Match. I think it shows that we as Bermudians love to have that banter back and forth and stand up for what we believe is best. But at the end of the day the game will be played on the field and the best team will win.

And we as Bermudians should take a lesson from that. We will go into battle and we will be confident about what we stand for, but at the end of the day, we are still one people, Bermudians, and we have many challenges to face together. It does not matter if we are Black or white, rich or poor, Somerset or St. George's. There are about 64,000 of us on this Island and we have a lot of work to do together and I look forward to better days ahead.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, happy Cup Match. To the people of Bermuda, stay safe on the roads. I am very concerned about our driving habits. And if you are going to drink, don't drive, call one of our great taxi ambassadors and take a taxi. Stay safe to everyone and God bless you and guide you.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Dunkley, for your comments. I wish you a good holiday, but may your team not win, Mr. Dunkley.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much.
Are there any further speakers?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, a point of order.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I will accept what you said, *May my team not win*. I will take the draw because the Cup will stay west.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, you have the floor.

NEED TO RAISE THE BAR IN THE SPEAKER'S CHAMBERS

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to speak to the content of the National Sports Centre. I am going to speak about the process. And let's make it clear, the process.

First, let me start by apologising for the fact that you have been placed in a distinct disadvantage. And I am saying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because as a manager, as a business executive, when I am not going to be in the office I hand my files over to my assistant—

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Member, Honourable Member—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am speaking to the process!

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Member. Mr. Simons, Honourable Member, with all due respect to you and the Speaker, I prefer you not to go down that road. I know where you are going. Leave that alone. You saw—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: It sounds like you think you know where I am going, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, yes, because you are saying that the files should have been passed on to me. That is what you are saying.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, no, no, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not saying that.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Well, what are you saying?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: If you allow me to continue. . .

The Deputy Speaker: Be careful.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, I am fine. I will be careful.

What I am saying is this. The file may not have [been] provided to you, but you could be briefed. But my bigger point is this: When we were debating this issue last week, the Speaker asked that we send him the information. So, we sent some of the information on Friday. And then we sent the completed package on Monday. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today is Friday. I have not heard from the Speaker. And these are facts.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, let me say this here. I am one of those folks that does not like to discuss people when they are not present.—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am just stating facts.

The Deputy Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I am not casting aspersions on him. I am just giving you the facts.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I prefer you to leave that alone. The Speaker will be back. You can see him before he comes back in Parliament and voice your displeasure, but I am not going to allow anyone to be talking about the Speaker in his absence.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay, well—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: —I will not involve the Speaker. I will speak about his Chamber and not him.

And as far as I am concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this Chamber had not had the opportunity to review the files then all I am asking is to give me a call and say, *I was unable to review the file at this point in time*.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simons, you can call the Speaker on Monday and I am sure he will be glad to talk to you. I would ask you, sir, please do not go there. You are a very respectful person; you are from a very respectful family. How do I know that?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I accept that and thank you for those comments. But at some point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to raise the bar when it comes to efficiency within the House of Assembly and within the Speaker's Chamber. This is not the first time that the protocols have not been dealt with in an efficient manner. And all I am saying is this cannot continue if we want the best decisions of our Parliament and if we want to have respectful debates, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So in regard to this matter, I will take your ruling and say, Let's raise the bar of efficiency within the

Parliament and within the Speaker's Chambers so that we won't have to go in this . . . have a repeat of this situation whereby nobody is aware of the decision of the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, but—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: [INAUDIBLE] but I will move on.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Mr. Simons, let me say this. You and I both know that if you have any suggestions for the Speaker to raise the bar, if it has to be raised, he will only be so glad and willing to accept your request. And so, the Speaker is very open. He talks to any and everybody. Move on, please. Thank you.

CUP MATCH—THE SPIRIT OF BERMUDA

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So I will move on to the issue of Cup Match (something lighter).

The Deputy Speaker: Well, I hope you are for St. George's.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this country needs a celebration. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had a divided community, a tense community. And despite our differences when it comes to our Cup Match teams, we know this is the holiday for Bermudians. We know that this is the holiday of all holidays for this country.

We have the Emancipation Day and we have Mary Prince Day. And we salute the heroine of this country as we recognise and honour how far we have come in regard to Emancipation Day. But as I said, let's bring our country together and celebrate Cup Match with love. We must socialise and celebrate the holiday together. We must rekindle our friendly spirit of competition. We must remember that the families of this country, the people of this country, are looking at us and saying, *Let's join hands and bring our country together because it serves no purpose for us to remain divided.* And we should lead that charge in regard to the atmosphere of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that said, Cup Match will be used as the tool to bring the people together. We all know that we have people who support Somerset, unfortunately—

[Laughter]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: —and people like myself who supports St. George's.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, that's good, cousin.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: But we all know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we are around that field, when we are walking around the Cup Match fields, whether it is in Somerset or St. George's, there is a spirit of camaraderie. There is a spirit of oneness. And there is a spirit of love, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is what we need to capitalise upon and further develop across this community beyond Cup Match.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Because this energy that is prevalent up and down this country must change.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: It must change. We must listen more. We must be responsive. We must respect people's differences. We must honour people's differences. And at the end, despite our differences, we must recognise at some point that we have to do something collectively, despite our differences, for the benefit of all this country. And so all of us have to give something to make this work.

And if we all give our bit for the betterment of this country, we can assure everyone that the division found in Bermuda today will dissipate. And so on that note, I say, Happy Cup Match to everyone. As many people as possible should go down to Cup Match and enjoy the spirit of Bermuda. Or, if you are not going to Cup Match, go to the beach, or go camping. Because the same spirit of love, oneness, can be found throughout the Island, and that is what makes Cup Match special in Bermuda. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Cole Simons. Those were very good comments about St. George's. Very good.

The House recognises the Honourable Minister Renee Ming, with those beautiful colours in back of her.

Hon. Renee Ming: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am hoping you can see me.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, I see you very clearly, and it is a beautiful light blue and dark blue background. It is so wonderful.

CUP MATCH—CELEBRATING THE HISTORY

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you. I am hoping all my colleagues can actually see it because it is that time of the year where of course, you know, we would be wearing our colours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and representing our teams.

I wanted to take a moment today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to first of all reflect on the Cup Match holiday. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Emancipation [Day] is probably one of our most important holidays. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason why we celebrate Cup Match has never, ever been one that I would take in a vein that is not extremely important. And in our areas and our Cup Match teams, it is critically important for us to remember why we celebrate Cup Match. We all know the history of it. We all know about it. We had a history lesson today so I do not even need to go down that path.

But my real message would be for us to remember why because it is no secret that we are living in a time when where it would appear that we are divided, but Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that differences of opinion do not necessarily divide us. And that we still have many things in common with each other. And so, it is important for us as a country, as an island, as Bermudians, not to forget those commonalities that we have. And even in the midst of looking for the things that make us common, the things that draw us together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is about our families, it is about our friends, it is about the things that truly make us unique as Bermudians.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am definitely one who puts in a lot of time and energy around the Cup Match holiday. The social media banter . . . and it is just that, banter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because there is no seriousness of it. I wish nothing bad against my Somerset friends, other than that, you know, of course I would love to see our Cup, my Cup, St. George's Cup, come home. But you know what? At the end of the day if that did not happen, we would just start this up again next year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again, remembering why we had this holiday and why we celebrate it and why it is critically important to us as a country to recognise and to celebrate our emancipation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to give a big shout-out to those Cup Match teams. Tomorrow it will be the final trial matches and all of our young, seasoned and experienced players will be out there gunning for their spot in the Cup Match Classic. It is unfortunate that my godson, Macai Simmons, who I knew was going to have a great year, will be unable to be out there representing us. But that is okay because Macai will be around to go another day. But there will be some new St. George's upstarts coming out and they are going to get an opportunity to show what they are worth this year and that they can get out on that stage and perform.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I truly do wish our captain, Onias Bascome, all the best. These are St. George's people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I have seen . . . I don't want to call them "little boys" because now they are young men, but we have seen these young men grow up, watch them mature and, you know, we

are proud of them. And it would be hard not to be proud of our young men.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take a lot of pride in the fact that these young men play Cup Match, and they recognise that it is a match, but it is bigger than them. It is one of those things where I don't know what it is like to play Cup Match, and I am sure I will never know. But I am sure that as they walk onto the field on Thursday and Friday it has got to be heart-warming to be playing at that level. So, I truly do wish each and every player all the best. I do believe it is our time—#ItsOurTime. That is for St. George's. It is our time. It truly is. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am making no prediction here today. I am merely making a statement. But I do feel that the Cup will be remaining in the eastern parish—

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Renee Ming: —for the next year. I also would like to say that Cup Match may be a little different this year, but the reason we celebrate remains the same. And I think that is important for us to remember as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to wish each and every one a safe and enjoyable Cup Match holiday. We know things now that we did not know last year in terms of COVID-19. And I am just going to tell everyone to be personally responsible as we move about. We know what we are dealing with as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I am not going to speak to the country today in a way that we don't know, because we are well aware. But we also need to be able to start being accountable. So if we are going out and we know what the guidelines are, we just need to know things for our personal safety and for our friends and for our family. Let's make sure that we have a safe holiday, an enjoyable holiday and get some time with your friends and family. I truly do wish everyone all the best. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to close on this. May St. George's win. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable Members, just let me . . . I forgot to do this this morning. The absence of the Honourable Member Kim Wilson and the Honourable Member Colonel Burch. I should have announced this early this morning. They asked to be excused today.

Are there any further speakers?

The Speaker recognises the Honourable Member Lovitta Foggo. Ms. Foggo, you have the floor.

[Motion to adjourn, continuing]

MPs WORKING FOR CONSTITUENCIES

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is Cup Match and Cup Match is my favourite time of the year. Hands down. It is Bermuda's most famed holiday. And indeed, the spirit behind Cup Match and all that it represents—Emancipation Day, Mary Prince Day—I believe was an incremental step in naming those days towards Bermudian sovereignty. And so it is understandable why we as Bermudians celebrate this famed holiday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a time, and part of the reason for Cup Match coming about was the fact that persons said, hands down, *I don't care what is expected of me as a labourer, there will be no work taking place today (and I will go on and say) and tomorrow.* And that action continued for many, many years until the Government recognised it as an official holiday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the holiday will not pass without my going to the Mary Prince Park to sit there and reflect and to be inspired and to think about what Lovitta Foggo must do in her capacity as an MP to help my Bermudians along so that when she finishes writing her ticket she will be able to say that she did all that she was supposed to do to try and assist her sisters and brothers. Because guess what? We are our brother's keeper and we are the voice of those we represent.

And having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I really wanted to speak to today to stand as a reminder is that much of the work that we do down in the eastern area, in particular, and there are other Members who are in other areas doing similar work, but I am going to speak about the eastern area. In particular, I am going to speak about constituencies 1, 2 and 3. Because we recognise where we are and the state that we are in in Bermuda today, we collectively believe it is our duty as representatives of our people to, in whatever little way we can, provide assistance to those who find themselves currently still in need of assistance.

And I say this in backdrop of the legislation, the amendment to the legislation that was just made. And having heard some comments regarding what people think about the Government and the like, we are as a party and as Government Members who do have differing positions and who do voice our concerns and dissent and our approval, all of those things, amongst ourselves. But I think collectively we all understand and appreciate that we are here to serve the very people who entrusted us to take care of their needs and their concerns in a way that is beneficial for all.

And so we in the east still provide . . . I will call it a community service, every weekend with very few

days off throughout the year, in between. Many persons within our constituencies who, again, are in need and it helps them get over the hump. Because as the Minister pointed out, our job is to assist and help our people to move forward in a way where they can be productive within their societies. And I think the service we provide and the little bit of help that it does give, at least allows them to be able to manage and move forward for another day.

I want to say that this service that we provide is symbolic I think of the pledge of all of us within the PLP party [which we] took collectively and within our own spirits when we put ourselves forward. Recognising that we are in this position to assist and help our people when and where we can. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we just on our lunch hour drove down to St. George's Cricket Club where the Government gave a monetary presentation to the president of St. George's Cricket Club. And while traveling down there, and I think the Minister from constituency 1 can attest to the fact that while traveling down there I took constituency calls. And I say that to say that we are being responsive to the needs of our people. So when people would suggest that we do not listen, and [do not] try and meet the needs and concerns of our people, here is a situation, you are just out of the House, calls are being made and I am there problem-solving in trying to get to the bottom of the issue. So that persons who have been affected can be restored to their level of comfort.

I would go as far as to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on both sides of the fence. I think most people who put themselves out for service . . . because you would know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this type of service requires much of us. And once we put ourselves forward like that, let's face it, we have a target on our back (for whatever reason) because many people see us as being able to answer all and do all though yet we are still just people who rely on the intelligence and the advice, the information through the government offices and what each of us have individually to share with each other, to problem solve and provide solutions, ideas if you will, for our people so that collectively everyone can realise and understand that we in our positions are there trying to assist and meet their needs.

I just wanted to remind people that myself, and I can say with certainty, and my colleagues, though being human, we try our best to address concerns and issues to the best of our ability and in a way to meet our constituents' needs. And so I thought [there was] no better time than Cup Match to reiterate my pledge to the good people of St. David's and collectively to the people of Bermuda, that I am here to serve and I am here to work with my partners to try and ensure that we have a better Bermuda for tomorrow and a better Bermuda for Bermudians. And so I wanted to say that today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think it is important that when we go on our

break that people understand and know, in spite of all the challenges that we are all confronted with as a people, and it is all of us, that we are here to do the people's business and we are here as best we can to serve them on a parochial level as well as on the national level.

I remember the very first time I said in my maiden speech, I made a pledge and a promise to the people of Bermuda when I took to my feet that I would serve them with the aplomb that is required when one stands in this office, the office of the MP. And I will continue to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it is both a privilege and an honour.

And going back to the Cup Match, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just say this. Hail to St. George's. Hail to the blue and blue. And I have no doubt, like those of us who support the right team, that we will be victorious in our hometown of St. George's.

So, Members, all of you, please have a wonderful Cup Match. To the great people of Bermuda, we stand with you. And for those of you who are coming to the east, please enjoy the great victory for the blue and blue team that you will experience come Thursday and Friday.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Foggo.

Are there any further speakers?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: MP Richardson.

IN SUPPORT OF MP CANNONIER

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I intend to be brief. I just wanted to rise this evening to lend my support to my Opposition colleague, the Honourable Craig Cannonier. There was an unenviable position and decision that had to be reached as it related to a contentious topic this evening. It had to be reached based on information you received after someone spoke and any reasonable Opposition Member would obviously have to contest that. And with respect, I submit that I would like to speak for the Honourable Craig Cannonier, or support him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason is I have not really spoken during motion to adjourn and the Honourable Craig Cannonier was someone who I did not know particularly well prior to entering this political environment. But he was someone who spoke to me and asked me questions and I often challenged him when I saw him in the street. I speak up for him tonight because he got me involved. He got me to step forward when a lot of other people in Bermuda were stepping back from our problems. And that is not to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is any one solu-

tion or any one group. But there are 36 Members in this Honourable House all of whom volunteered to step forward into the fray of problems and solving them for the betterment of the country and the people of Bermuda. And that says something, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could have not stepped forward.

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

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I sat down with the Honourable Member and a few other colleagues at lunch when we were getting involved in . . . when they were asking my interest in this space. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . my apologies, Madam Acting Speaker, I did not see the change.

I had served about I think about seven years in the Bermuda Police Service and I have done about five years in the Bermuda Regiment. I have had the opportunity to attend various training courses and came across a lot different people from different worlds. And in the Regiment there was an incredible amount of lessons learned, just about Bermuda and about people in general, how to work with people, learning about people from different communities, different families within the one Bermuda family. And then with the police, you know, when we saw the protests against police abuse and we have concerns about systemic racism in policing, you know, policing was not easy and I did see . . . I don't think I got to see the best of Bermuda all the time.

I did a lot though, to be fair. Parish constables, I was taught and raised by some great police sergeants including one who passed away (may he rest in peace) who was instrumental in raising me as a young constable, Sergeant Greg Grimes. He showed me a lot. And so did Sergeant Michelle Simons. It just showed me a lot. And I walked away from that whole experience, entered the corporate world, and with the exception of some charities I joined, I figured my time in service was over. I had done by bit for Queen and Country, so to speak. And I just sort of said, *Well, anything that happens now is just somebody else's problem.*

And like I said, I came across the Honourable Member Craig Cannonier and we had a lot of conversations and he started challenging me on what I am going to do. *If I have an opinion about something that is wrong, what am I going to do about it?*

And so we are sitting around this lunch and I said, *Look, let's be honest here. There is a lot of stuff wrong. There is millions of dollars spent on bus schedules. That doesn't seem to be going right. Education seems to be heading in the wrong direction.* And I do not want to belabour the point, but I said, *There are quite a few things here that require improvement, modification.* And I said, *So, just walk me through this. Why do you want to be the one to fix it? Why would you run headlong into such a challenge?*

And he and the colleagues turned to me and said that basically it was because they had children and they need Bermuda to be the kind of country where their kids have a future. I cannot imagine a better reason to get stuck into the fight of working for the betterment of Bermuda. I get that we all come from different political dispositions. I get that we all have different thoughts and considerations. I get that this place is going to be contentious.

But I am proof positive that there is space for the Honourable Craig Cannonier to raise questions, challenge authority and serve his country. He introduced me to this world. I hope and pray that I am effective and of use to my constituents and to the country in general. And I just wish him all the best in his continued efforts to do the very basics of politics in the Opposition ranks, which is to hold power to account. With that, I thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I hear two voices I believe. I am going to take Member Lister.

Member Lister, you have the floor and you have 20 minutes.

CUP MATCH—ROAD SAFETY REMINDERS

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I will be brief tonight. I will not be using my full 20 minutes. I want to thank the listening public, my fellow colleagues, and I want to send everyone a Happy Holiday coming up, but enjoy the weekend as it comes.

Madam Acting Speaker, much has been said tonight about Cup Match so I do not want to get into too much detail. But everyone who knows me knows where I stand. I am Somerset through and through. Born and raised with Somerset my whole life. So, you know, I am red and blue. There is no question about that. I just want to say to all those St. George's fans out there. As much as St. George's likes to say they are as far from red and blue as possible, I want them all to remember that they all have a little red in them. It is called blood. We all share red blood, Madam Acting Speaker.

An Hon. Member: My blood is blue.

[Laughter]

Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr.: So with that, Madam Acting Speaker, in my comments tonight I just want to speak to road safety. As we head into the weekend and into the upcoming Cup Match holiday, where people will be having fun, they will be either going to

the game or going to different events over the holiday period, I just want to remind people that while you are out and about traveling on our roads, whether you are on a bike, in a car, or even if you are out and about in a truck, however it is you are traveling. And even if you are planning to go out and socialise and consume alcohol, please remember to plan ahead.

If you are going out to drink, plan how you will get home, whether that means hiring a taxi, a minibus, calling a friend or family member, or prearranging transportation with either HomeSafe or Hitch. Remember the options out there so there is no reason why while we are celebrating and enjoying the Cup Match holiday to go out and irresponsibly drink and having to drive or ride home under the influence, Madam Acting Speaker. I just want everyone to enjoy the holiday whether you are a blue and blue or red and blue, enjoy the holiday.

Hopefully the best team wins. Look for a nice time where we all can relax with friends and family. And just to . . . as we all know, these past 18 months have been an [abnormal] and different time and we are going to celebrate the Cup Match holiday so we can spend the time with friends, relax and let some of the stresses of the day-to-day life get away from us and take the time to rejuvenate, refresh and just to catch up.

So, like I said, my comments are brief tonight, Madam Acting Speaker. I just want everyone to enjoy the holiday, be safe and remember to not drink and drive. Remember to slow down and to drive with care and caution. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. You definitely saved yourself, because when you were saying something about red and blue, it certainly sounded like expletives to me, so I was getting a bit concerned. So, you are off the hook.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: All right.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Okay, that sounds like MP Weeks. MP Weeks, you have the floor.

MARY PRINCE EMANCIPATION PARK

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

It would be remiss of me not to speak of Emancipation [Day] and Mary Prince Day. I have heard many Members talk about the significance of this holiday, but what I really want to do, Madam Act-

ing Speaker, is talk about Mary Prince and Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park.

We have come a long way in acknowledging what Mary Prince means to the history of Bermuda. I have said it before and I say it again, we have to *now* focus attention on Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park. Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park is a place that I always go with my wife to sit down and eat lunch, but that is not what I am talking about right now. What I am talking about is that it is time for us on the first anniversary is the attention that we must give to the park. It needs more than benches. It needs bathrooms. And I am not just talking about porta-potties. We need to treat this as our national park!

So, we need to create jobs for someone, one or two people even, who are going to maintain this national park of ours that we have now put in place. It is more than a name. We need to make it such that it will be inviting to tourists, it will be inviting to our schoolkids and even on our Black History Tour. And I know Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park, and other Mary Prince sites. We need to make this park one of national significance. We need to make this park on par with Queen Victoria Park, [formerly] Par-La-Ville Park, and it is up to us as the current Government, Madam Acting Speaker, to make this so! We cannot keep talking about somebody going down there to cut the grass, you know, or you go on down there and there are no benches.

To me, Madam Acting Speaker, that is ridiculous. It is time for us to invest some time, energy and money into Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park, [one of Bermuda's] National Parks. [It needs] some bathrooms, benches, and probably a little building that has the history of Mary Prince; even a little statue of some sort to make this park meaningful to us, more than the second day of Cup Match.

WATER SPORTS SAFETY REMINDERS

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: But moving on, Madam Acting Speaker, before I go, as the Chairman of the Water Safety Council, I want to kind of echo the sentiments of the last speaker who is the Chairman of the Road Safety. Much of what he said pertains to what I want to say as far as using the water.

I want everyone to enjoy the water, boating and the like, but please, recognise that you are not on the water alone and there are other people on the water and you need to respect the water much like you have to respect the road. So, enjoy yourselves while you are on the water but be mindful of the rules. Don't drink and boat! You know, plan to have someone who is not going to be drinking to operate the crafts, because it doesn't take long to get in some kind of accident or mishap. So, let's enjoy ourselves, but remember to act responsibly and safely. And as I close, Madam Acting Speaker, I want to make it clear, as

everyone else has made it clear who they support. I support Somerset Cricket Club through and through.

The Acting Speaker: I feel sorry for you.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: And I heard people say may the best team win. I am not one of those to say such a thing. Somerset will take the Cup down to St. George's, show it around and when they leave, they will take it back. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I know you don't want me to mute you, Member.

[Laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Everyone have a great Cup Match. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: That sounds like MP Swan. MP Swan, you wish to speak?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Madam.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. And you look so nice in your attire. You have the floor, MP Swan.

ENJOYING BERMUDIAN ARTISTS

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you very much for those salutations. They are much appreciated.

I am going to start off in the west today. I am going to start off in White Hill, from where my origins originate and wear my tourism hat, as I often do and often enjoy doing and say that the Bermuda Tourism Authority has been doing some great initiatives during this COVID-19 period, Madam Acting Speaker, with regard to reaching out and encouraging young entrepreneurs to find their way in Bermuda tourism experiences.

And on July 25 at a location I, as well as most people, know, Buna Gallery and Coffee House, where Dr. Dana Selassie has an establishment, you will be able to partake in some great Bermuda artists: Ras Solomon, Joy Barnum and Live Wires and the Kings Band.

And I am so excited, Madam Acting Speaker, that I cannot see that line-up being able to host all of the people who want to and should be there! So, I am hoping that this will be a once per month situation, a regular occurrence where the visitors throughout the Island can do what we do best, join in with Bermudian artists and enjoy Bermudian artists, and maybe something like this would even spill over to nearby White

Hill field and then have the after party at Buna Gallery. But the first one will be at Buna Gallery and Coffee House, and it is a great initiative that is supported by the Bermuda Tourism Authority on July 25.

And there are many other initiatives to encourage entrepreneurs. You know, COVID-19 has dealt the entire globe a terrible blow, but out of adversity throughout the history of mankind, people have risen up out of [INAUDIBLE] and there is no better time for persons to look at what the opportunities are than now. And that is just one example of a very talented Bermudian who has taken their talents and their academic and educational talents and married them up with their arts and cultural talents turning it into a business where persons can learn—particularly those of us of African descent and those who are not of African descent who live within a country with a large population of persons with African descent—about *our culture* as we have learned about theirs. And I just want to say that this is a great celebration.

UTILISING BERMUDA'S HISTORIC FORTS FOR TOURISM

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I am going to move a little bit toward the east. I am just going to stop off at Port Royal and Whale Bay, where a vision that I have been speaking about for several years, . . . and when I was appointed by the Premier to be a part of the government golf courses as chairman and on the Tourism Authority, I had given a mandate with regard to forts, but no money! But that is fine! Because you have to have a vision, and a vision will attract the type of funding that is necessary first and foremost. And Madam Acting Speaker, I am speaking particularly to Whale Bay Fort, Alexandra Battery, Martello Tower out there in Ferry Reach, Fort George up on the hill, and you know what? For good measure I want to mention that great fort up on the battery in St. David's, as well.

These particular locations, in addition to the other forts that are located in the Island, present an opportunity for us, Madam Acting Speaker, to be able to utilise some infrastructure that can take the pressure off our townships and areas that are popular for tourists. I will use Whale Bay Battery as an example because it will be the spotlight of the world when the Bermuda Championship is held through global television. And that particular location, if done right, and I have done some preliminary work in that area and I have spoken to it, and I have even reached out to UNESCO in my efforts, but that particular fort, along with Martello Tower and the other forts that I mentioned present a unique opportunity to take the pressure off minibuses traversing to public areas mostly to look for places where people can get a vantage spot and use the bathrooms as well.

And their price points might not be pitched to the price point of persons who come to play golf. But if you had a fort that housed bathrooms, that had shops,

that had souvenir shops, that had refreshment stops, that had vantage points, that had telescopes that you could see the whales out there jumping, had proper parking, was done in conjunction with the neighbouring business like I am responsible for there, that in itself presents a unique opportunity for us to have economies of scale to the largest order and improve upon both infrastructures that the one infrastructure that is there currently functioning at a high level for the Government of Bermuda and another one that can serve as a much-needed audience that we need to facilitate and attract more of them.

So, I am looking for us with the right vision to find the funds and trust me, I know in my heart of hearts they will come and it will service those areas well. And when we restore those forts in those areas, not only do we tell the story about the military stories associated and the geographical reasons why those forts were placed in those strategic locations, you also tell the history of those communities. Whale Bay, for instance, has a huge history dating back to the Bascome family and the Santucci's, offspring of the Bascome and the Smiths that come out of the Bascome and the Pitts and all the Beans and all the families of Whale Bay and Evans Bay and Rose Hill and the like and Jumpsy Paul's Farm and before that golf course was even there. And that type of history and the history that emerged out of there with the Herman "Tucci" Bascome, the great golfer who was also at Ocean View Golf Course came because of a part of the history that the tour guides would tell and captured in those particular beautification efforts that take place.

And likewise, that would happen at Martello Tower and Fort George Hill, because you could tell the story of when Herman "Tucci" Bascome came to St. George's to play against the legendary Louis Rafeal Corbin who was one of the forebears of the desegregation of golf in the whole United States of America in the 1930s and 1940s. Because they could not stay in the hotel, the St. George's Hotel where the golf course was located, they would stay in the fort! And then they would get up at the crack of dawn and play golf.

So, we can incorporate . . . and you know, Madam Acting Speaker, I want to thank you, because you have been thanked already for your vision to be able to bring forth the Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park. But also during your tenure as a Minister you brought forth the story in real life of Louis Rafeal "Kid" Corbin from St. George's who is connected with all of the families in St. George's in some real way. You were part of making sure that this documentary exists today. And I want to thank you for that, because it is something that took place during your tenure and it is serving our communities very, very well, and will continue to serve us well, as Dr. Jeffrey Sammons from New York University continues on with that work and writes that book.

Just this week I had a visit from the food and beverage director of the Viking cruise ship [Viking Ocean Cruises]. Thanks to Mr. Clement Talbot, the former chairman of the golf course, and the former Deputy Speaker, Mr. Lister. They took the time to take him around Bermuda and bring him to Port Royal. And I took him to Whale Bay Battery, and we stood up there and I shared with him the vision and I showed him that this fort has the greatest vantage point that exists in that community and how great functions could be held there.

As a food and beverage man he said, *Man, you can sell that vision! If only you had the money.* I said, I am standing beside a banker right now. You have to have the vision that a banker could buy in [INAUDIBLE] to his wealth management clients.

So, I just want to say, Madam Acting Speaker that we are moving forward with these types of initiatives. And I want to thank the Minister of Transport because we would not have had the Viking [representative] there if not for a good word put in his ear about homeporting and also but for a Minister to follow through on a good word about homeporting, to the extent that other jurisdictions picked up on it and were able to move on a dime and capitalise on it. So, that visit by the food and beverage manager of Viking meant a lot to me personally and to be able to share that. Because that coastline could also serve as a great beach for persons who are coming to play golf and who do not want their folks down at the Horse-shoe stepping over people there. They could also use the Whale Bay area as well, Madam Acting Speaker.

You know, as I am traversing through the Island, I am just going to move to Devonshire and say that I am appreciative and know that there was some discovery or revelations about Mary Prince's connection with a building in Devonshire. And I just want to say that these types of revelations are very important and get the attention of all of us. But we would not have known that, unless it was the for the good work of people like Dr. Clarence Maxwell and others around the world who are sharing with us today things that we were not taught in school, Madam Acting Speaker. That is why what you were able to do for us, for Louis Corbin, and what you were able to do in the space of time with the cultural significance and historical significance of the Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park is so important to us today. And I thank you once again for that.

CUP MATCH—CELEBRATING THE HISTORY

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: As I move east, because on the road to Damascus this young fellow grew up in White Hill. But his uncle before him played cricket for the Rangers, Carl Anderson, the late Carl Anderson who died only about 18 months ago. And he came from White Hill, Whale Bay, born in Whale Bay and guess what? In 1960 and 1961, a left arm bowler that

bowled very similarly, not too dissimilar from Clarence Parfitt was in [Calvin] "Bummy" Symonds' reserve for "Bummy" Symonds St. George's Cup Match team.

I get ribbed all the time and reminded I am from White Hill, yes, I am, and proudly so. But I can tell you that many a Cup Match team were skipped over White Hill and went to my uncle down in Rangers and picked over Ranger's boys long before they looked at the White Hill fellows. And we got the guys who retired from Cup Match and then they came down and played in White Hill. And like St. David's, my White Hill cousins, we had a special synergy with the blue and yellow from St. David's and the blue and yellow from White Hill we were very . . . oh boy, kindred spirits, to the extent that [Elliott] "Jonah" Pitcher, when he won County game for St. David's in 1969 or 1970s era, he was recalled to St. David's during a mutiny to keep him aside, but when he was playing for Somerset Bridge Recreation Club.

And that leads me to my blue and blue heritage of today. On the road to Damascus Saul saw the light, and he switched. And yes, he is now St. George's! And yes, he is blue and blue. And yes, he is proud to say that the only other team otherwise than Somerset Bridge Recreation Club that he played for, St. George's Cricket Club were on this Cup Match in memory of my opening bat partner for the second team led by Ricky Hodsoll, Larry "Cocky" Steede. I am dedicating this Cup Match to my open bat partner on the second team, Larry Cocky Steede.

I want every St. George's player that suits up in the trial match tomorrow to play their heart out because Larry Steede did not play first team cricket. Like me, he only suited up for the second team. I played one Cup Match trial because I always carried my whites. If someone was a little slow getting there and I made sure that I got there, I got a hit because I was an opening bat for the second team. Of course, they threw the spin on and [Elden Ray] "Chick" Adams sent be back to the pavilion early. I could handle the fast pace. But they switched it up on me. They knew that little spin would get me out of my crease, and rightfully so.

But I just want to say, Madam Acting Speaker, that Cup Match is about family and it is about celebrating our emancipation. Our forefathers, and yes, my forefathers from the west, the Ratteray family and the Swan family and the Anderson family and the Hall family and all the families of Somerset, the Simmons and the Simons and the Hunts, and all those who knew that they had an in to get picked before us White Hill fellows. Cup Match means a lot to every family throughout the Island. Even if you come from the central parishes, Cup Match means something to everyone. And the common denominator is love.

Let's not forget that it brings us together and whether or not you go to the game for varying reasons, take a little time out to reflect on the journey that our forefathers had to make to get us where we are

today, notwithstanding our challenges in life. Those before us had far greater ones than we have today, let me tell you that. They had persons who could make laws to hold them back. We are in a position to make laws to lift us up. We are in a position to do things to lift us up. Let us continue our best efforts to do just that.

And Madam Acting Speaker, I love Cup Match because I get it. I get it tough. Because when my White Hill cousins come down and do see me with my blue and blue, they give it to me harder than anyone else. But I am telling my St. George's boys and I am a Stadium links St. George's. I am a Wellington back roads St. George's, North Shore St. George's boy when it comes to Cup Match. There are different enclaves in our St. George's community that represent: Back o' Town, Riverside Drive. Oh yes! Out there in Underwood Cricket Club and out in Ferry Reach and all of that makes up St. George's.

But I am here to tell young St. Georgians that get in that team, win this one for Larry "Cocky" Steede, may he rest in peace. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that MP Vance Campbell?

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is correct.

The Acting Speaker: MP Vance Campbell, you have the floor.

CUP MATCH—THE SPIRIT OF BERMUDA

Mr. Vance Campbell: My comments, Madam Acting Speaker will be brief, especially since many of the previous speakers have already spoken about the reason why we celebrate Cup Match. Whether you choose to celebrate it or not, lovely beaches, in our parks, at home or you plan on attending the game, I just ask that you take one moment to reflect on the reason why we have this major holiday. The other thing I would like to do is to encourage people to enjoy it responsibly. And the two chairmen of the Water Safety and Road Safety committees have spoken on those issues.

But the main reason I want to speak today and as I said, I will be brief, is I want to congratulate President Neil Paynter and his team for doing an excellent job in ensuring that there will be a Cup Match and those of us who are attending appreciate it greatly. The field looks immaculate. I was down there last night. But once those bleachers are decorated with the various colours, blue and blue, and those other

ones, it will look like a sight only to be found here in Bermuda. So, I just wanted to give a shout-out to President Neil Paynter and his crew for getting Cup Match on. Because they had short notice and so, I think a great deal of thanks should go out to them for ensuring that we do not miss another year of Cup Match.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member Campbell.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak on the motion to adjourn?

There being no other Members—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that the Deputy Premier?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, it is, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Deputy Premier, you have the floor.

CUP MATCH—HISTORY OF THE FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Acting Speaker, to speak during this motion to adjourn. I must say, it is a privilege to have you preside over me in this chair and you are in the Speaker's Chair. It is not often that I get the opportunity to be presided over by such an eminent Member of the House, other than the Deputy Speaker and the Speaker. And, I must say, there are so very few times that you and I found ourselves on opposite sides other than on Cup Match. And I am glad it is only two days out of the year, because I am not sure I could stand any other more time.

[Laughter]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: We might not have the same agreement on those things. I am not sure that I could stand up to it, but I will tolerate the next couple of days.

The Acting Speaker: So far you are starting off [IN-AUDIBLE]. Don't . . . don't vary.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, I guess I will survive for the next few days. I will be able to survive and recover after the weekend, and we will be friends again.

[Laughter]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: But it is great that we have Cup Match as an important topic as our discussion of many in this motion to adjourn, Madam Acting Speak-

er, because I really think we do need to make sure that every year we make sure that Cup Match and what the origins and meaning of Cup Match [are] and what it really is about is the major content of information that is put out and we innovate the wider landscape with that information during this time of the year.

The Honourable Member who sits in constituency 11 did speak of the roles of the Friendly Societies and their crucial involvement with the start of Cup Match. And I think it must be remembered, and I do not know if the Honourable Member spoke about this. I did not hear everything he said, but I heard part of it, is that, you know, those early pioneering days when those two Friendly Societies from the two parts of the Island began the process that would eventually become Cup Match, these were either the children of slaves or possibly the grandchildren of slaves, and they set about doing something to commemorate a very important achievement of their people. The very fact that they and their ancestors were able to create the Friendly Societies that they did, Madam Acting Speaker, was a sign of their effort to empower themselves in itself! That must be remembered, that the origins of Cup Match come from an effort to empower, an effort to realise remembrance of an important moment of emancipation in their lives and the lives of their ancestors, possibly just one or two generations removed from 1833, 1834.

So, it may have been the grandchildren or possibly elderly children of those people who began the movement that would become Cup Match. And the very creation of those societies themselves of which we still as a legacy have with us today, although there are so few of them left, remains a symbol of the efforts of Africans who are descendants of those who were in bondage to empower themselves out of that bondage. And Cup Match in itself, though it is a pleasurable celebration, allows us to remember, to relive an effort of empowerment, an effort of liberation that our people strove to bring about for themselves in those early days. And we still continue to drive for empowerment, for freedom and liberation as a people, as African people.

Let Cup Match be remembered not just for the game, not just for the revelry and the expenditure that we all thrive on. Let it be remembered for the very symbol of empowerment and freedom that it really comes out of—that has got to be important—and the creation of other fixtures that characterise the aspirations of the majority of Bermudians around this process of finding freedom, finding liberation in our experience. The creation of the Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park which has been so lauded, Madam Acting Speaker, is another symbol of that and another effort to realise the history of Bermuda, the real history of Bermuda. The history that had Bermuda built economically on the enslavement of people and the story that Mary Prince left us that allows us to relive her experi-

ence, thus realise our own as children and descendants (some of us) of people who were in bondage.

But also it allows those who may have not been the people in bondage, but those who perhaps were even descendants of those slave owners to realise that there is a story that they themselves may not be acquainted with that is a part of the Bermuda story. And they must respect that story and appreciate the story in a way that understands that, yes, it is painful. Yes, it may be in some cases embarrassing. But it allows us to see the Bermuda for who she is. We should not see it in embarrassment; we should not see it in disgrace. We should see it as a part of the character that helped to develop the country that we are and the mix and dimension of the people who we are. And we can go forward having a better understanding of each other.

Even the experience of Cup Match as we celebrate it allows us every year to relive that possibility, in my view. It is not just about the revelry, about the game and about the expenditure. But it is about a lot of other things too. And I am so pleased that we now have a park in perpetuity, as well as Mary Prince Day to continue to realise that. And those days must be used effectively, and the fact that they exist, so we keep telling this story so that we know that Cup Match is more than about the game that we all love, but it is more than about that.

Now, Madam Acting Speaker, I will move on from that, and I would like to talk about a few other things. How much time do I have left, Madam Acting Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: You began at 6:24. You have used up seven minutes of your time.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, thank you. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: You do not have to use the whole 13 minutes.

PLP GOVERNMENT LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I know that, and I do not intend to. But I do not want to use my minutes unwisely and waste them, because I would like to also talk about a few other things. Just some of the things that I think that the last 17 months have actually embedded in the experience that we all have as a community, as a people.

I am pleased, Madam Acting Speaker, that our country is open, having had to spend much of the last 17 months closed or certainly a significant part of it, if not all of it, the majority of it closed, that we are able to this year have the holiday that we all love. That we now have the opportunity to receive visitors who can enjoy the holiday with us, that families can get

together and have those picnics, that grandparents and children can get together, that families can feel a sense of doing what we have for generations done. We could not do this last year, but we can do it this year. This is a good thing.

And that is because of the steps that were taken around public health, the measures taken to protect the community, to make vaccinations available to the community so that people can choose to be vaccinated, and a way to add to the number of measures to protect.

Vaccines are not the only measure, Madam Acting Speaker, which is a form of protection against disease. It is just one of the measures, along with other public health measures of which have been deployed including: strong border protection; internally effective measures to track, trace and treat, and isolate; wearing masks; proper human hygiene; and effective medical attention. [These] are all of the different measures, all measures that have been taken to keep the country safe so that we now have the freedom that we have to experience the holiday that we love.

So Bermuda is open. Bermuda is open for business, Bermuda is open for visitors, Bermuda is becoming more open for opportunities. And with that will come, potentially, Madam Acting Speaker, more jobs for people so that people will not have to depend on the social safety nets that we have effectively spent tens of millions of dollars on over the last 17 months creating [programmes] to protect and keep people above water. Then hopefully more jobs will come out of this openness, more opportunities will come out of this openness. Even as we are challenged with issues of the cost of living there are still opportunities that we hope will get people back to work so that they can deal with their daily issues and take care of their families and themselves.

But over the last umpteen months, we have tried to work with retailers in our grocery stores and others to ensure that prices were reasonably stable for the goods that were needed. And we are working on doing more. The Honourable Deputy Speaker is working on some of that work. I know that he is committed to seeing issues such as the cost of living addressed for so many of our people, Madam Acting Speaker.

Job creation, as I stated, is so important. I am so pleased, Madam Acting Speaker, that in my own Ministry we have taken the issue of job creation to heart and a part of our agenda, which is why in the last few weeks I have announced programmes to train people in the areas to become level 1 installers of solar PV as a way to create new jobs and to build the capacity that we as a country will need to embrace a renewable energy future and to begin to create those jobs on Island. The expertise and the technical proficiency so that Bermudians can be installing, can be designing, can be engineering systems on Island that

can address our renewable energy needs, whether it be for our home or for our commercial environment.

And we are looking forward to working further with the private sector on these initiatives, Madam Acting Speaker, and making sure that Bermuda sees innovation in the energy sector, whether it be with wind technology, with the more effective use of our ocean and certainly with the expansion of solar PV.

We are so happy that we were able to launch our Bermuda plan that will help to transform and bring a different approach to planning. We also are pleased that we were able to announce the draft North East Hamilton local plan, which will bring new opportunities for development and economic investment in North Hamilton, Madam Acting Speaker. I am looking forward to making more announcements in the future, Madam Acting Speaker.

And even as I mention those things, I just want to jump back a little bit to talking about some of the work that the Government and the community had to do around the pandemic. There are a few things that have happened during the pandemic which I think, despite the enormous strain and stress and expense that dealing with the pandemic has put on our country, Madam Acting Speaker, opportunities have been created. New capacities have been designed and deployed. New job opportunities for many people have been created, and they have diversified their skill sets to be a part of the efforts to fight the pandemic.

We just recently saw the new MDL [Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory] established with many young Bermudian talented people in the area of sciences and biology, which I know you are very familiar with, Madam Acting Speaker, to create new jobs for so many young people, as we have seen and witnessed. Many of the people doing the testing and the diagnostic work that this lab does, which is overseen by a young Bermudian scientist and the team, which includes persons like (I know, your daughter) Dr. Amne (née Foggo) Osseyran, has been crucial and is a part of that work over the past 17 months. And other young Bermudians in the medical field have supported the work of MDL.

But there is a huge new constituency of young Bermudians who have been trained in different aspects of lab work just because we had to create this lab to deal with our needs around COVID-19. And many of our young Bermudian doctors and physicians have been leading the charge in our overall effort to fight COVID-19, with the testing that we had to do and the building of the testing capacity, which has helped us in managing the situation.

But I am most proud of what we as a country have done with MDL because we would not have such a high rating globally with our response to COVID-19 without the work of MDL and the young team, and so many other people in the health sector in Bermuda. So I have to say that not only has MDL been a great example of our response to COVID-19,

but it also has created great new opportunities that now many young people can find potentially in medicine and in science. And I hope that those young people there, as perhaps at some point the response to COVID-19 will subside, they will go on to other jobs in sciences and in medicine and come back and serve the country.

Let us not forget the other job opportunities and interesting economic examples that have been created during this time with Circle in the area of blockchain and digital currency, and the new field that does deal with digital banking. We have seen the presence of Circle expand in Bermuda, creating new opportunities. I think there is one thing that I can say contrasts this particular Government from some of the past Administrations, and that is we have not only desired to reinforce our existing industries; we have tried to build new industries in Bermuda and bring in new industries, new innovative industries that represent what we see as the future for our country around digital assets and the whole growing and emerging world in that sector.

So even as we now look to celebrate our past with the celebration of Cup Match and all that I have discussed, Madam Acting Speaker, we must deal with the here and now. And I do hope that some of the comments about perhaps making the Mary Prince [Emancipation] Park a little bit more special and getting a lot more care and attention—I am sure that the Government will take those suggestions on from all of the Members who have made those suggestions. That is about the here and now and taking care of what we need now. We have gone through legislation today that deals with trying to take care of some of the people in need. That effort, I know, for this Government will continue. But we do also need to embrace our future and lay the foundation for a positive future for our country, Madam Acting Speaker.

So as we celebrate our past, take care of the present, we must embrace and lay a strong foundation for the future that we want Bermuda to have, whether it is a future where we have a robust, responsive health care system; we have a renewed move and a revamped education system; we have a renewable energy future, a clean energy future; we can protect our people; and we can protect our environment, whether it be a marine environment, and respond to climate change in ways that will protect our Island. But we must also lay the economic foundation that will create the jobs for the people to come, that will lay a strong diversified economy that will be self-sufficient, and lay—

The Acting Speaker: Minister, you are on your last minute.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you.

And we lay a foundation for our sovereignty, economic sovereignty, political sovereignty, social

sovereignty, cultural sovereignty, Madam Acting Speaker. Those are the things I see as opportunities for the Bermuda to come, and I look forward to being part of that journey with everybody who sees it as important for Bermuda. Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: I would like to speak, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that Madam Attorney General, my favourite Attorney General?

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Aww, thank you. Your only one right now.

[Laughter]

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Indeed. I have one complaint, Madam Attorney General.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: What is that?

The Acting Speaker: Next time you take to the floor, please come appropriately attired.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: I am appropriately attired for the occasion.

[Laughter]

The Acting Speaker: Madam Attorney General, you have the floor. It is 6:44.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Before you start, Madam Attorney General, let me just remind Members that this is your maiden speech, I believe.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: To the extent that I have been speaking in the Legislature since 2017, I do not consider this my maiden speech. But if you want to characterise it as that—

The Acting Speaker: You are very adept at speaking. But this is your maiden speech without dealing with the legislation. So I would just ask Members to be mindful of that.

Madam Attorney General, I look forward to your comments.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Thank you.

Madam Acting Speaker, I had no intention of speaking this evening, but I feel compelled to draw our collective attention to a few things. First and foremost, protocol would dictate that I express my appreciation for being here in this place, express my appreciation to my wonderful constituents and my Executive branch and my parents. I am not saying anything that I have not already said directly to those people. But I am grateful.

When I listened to our sessions this afternoon and this evening, there was one phrase that came to mind. And it was, *Here we go again*. While I know you have all extolled the virtues of Cup Match and the excitement to come, the competition, et cetera, et cetera, I am in a different space right now. Because when the Opposition chose once again to raise the whole spectre of the National Sports Club . . . and there was one phrase that stood out to me. The phrase that was mentioned was, *This matter is not going anywhere*.

And what that phrase did for me was it took me back two and a half years to 2017 forward, actually almost three years, to the debacle of the Department of Child and Family Services and the unrelenting attack of the Opposition, aided by the *Royal Gazette* and other community players who expressed themselves and represented themselves wearing the cloak of “community concern,” who saw no compunction in attacking the organ of the Government that is responsible for ensuring that the underlying causes of social dysfunction in the country are dealt with—no compunction. Two and a half years.

And my staff . . . and I will say it was a privilege to be able to serve and assist that department. My staff was mortified. And at one point we quantified the number of news reports attacking that organ. I can say tonight, Madam Acting Speaker, that I am proud that the Director of Child and Family Services and his staff are actually a manifestation of the same principles we are extolling tonight that are associated with emancipation—resilience and strength—because in the face of those nasty, unrelenting, unforgiving, undeserved attacks, they continued to serve the children and families in our country who most needed their assistance. They continued to keep their doors open when they had no security, when they were demoralised, when they were attacked.

We owe them a huge and sincere expression of gratitude. So *here we go again*. And while we have been banned from going into the topic—and I certainly will not—I will say this much: If people in this country would take the time to spend as much energy as we do on the negative, we might actually have some positive outcomes to impact the destiny of our people. We have any number of issues that are fire-burning in this country right now, from vaccination, non-vaccination, from whether [we] can travel without restrictions, whether [we] can enter the country without restrictions. Yes. And against that backdrop, we have a

Government that is trying to keep our country and our people safe.

The Premier has said earlier about the people’s democratic right to protest, and we get it. That is true. But we often cloak our nefarious activities in all sorts of high-brow principles to hide our real intentions. And we talk in this House, and we are polite and politically correct, about what our people are doing. But rest assured, from my vantage point there is nothing democratic, there is nothing politically correct, there is nothing polite about protesters who choose to go beyond the message that we need to hear to booing our leaders, to maligning our party, to maligning people who do not share their views, to making threats on individuals’ safety, who hide behind social media to create a division.

To those who are under the misapprehension that that division is caused by something that this Government is doing, check yourselves, okay? Because I sit around this table on a Tuesday, and I have a Leader whose only concern during this pandemic was that our people could eat. There was nobody in this country that was going to be left behind. And now we are on round two. So there are any number of fires burning. We have the Minister of Education with a vision for education, and we have people who do not want to see certain schools shut down. I get it. Okay?

We have a historical legacy that we want to preserve. But guess what? If you go back to your history, you will understand that the power of our story was the old storytelling that our people engaged in way back on the Continent. When you are authentic and when you want to be honest with yourself, ask yourself if we have kept those traditions. We have not! So we focus on the physical. We focus on what is expedient because we fail to spend the time to pass on our legacy.

So we will fight for a building. And all politicians fight. I have been asked to go to a town hall meeting. My question is, *Okay. In what capacity am I going to those meetings? I’m all in. Am I Kathy Simmons? Am I MP Kathy? Am I the Government Kathy?* But whatever capacity, I am going in; I will attend because I love to interact with our people, yes.

I do not expect the messaging of that group or anybody in that room to be lost in attacks against the Minister. Okay? Do I think we need to knock down the school and go to Somerset Primary? No. No, I do not, because I am not interested in the physical. You can put that school anywhere. What I am interested in are people’s commitments to each other. And I will say this without apology. We know recently we have had the union fighting and fussing and having a view on the Government. Yes. I get all that. Decentralisation, any number of issues. I was out in my constituency two weeks ago delivering dinners—and thank you for the community partners who help us with that. And there was a man who had been disenfranchised from a union matter who had my ear. And he went on and

on with passion—passion, real passion! We have a lot of passion.

So I will say to all of my protesters, I will say to all of our advocates, *Check yourselves*. Because if you spent that much time on addressing the ills, the real dysfunction in this community, we would all be fine. Because while you are there worrying and fussing against the schools, fussing about the unions, fussing about the Premier, our young men continue to kill each other. Put that energy somewhere else!

While you are fussing about saving a tree or building, we have families living in one room. Everybody sleeps in one bed. And somebody has had a bit much to drink; they will roll over and physically/sexually assault a child. And where will you be? Still trying to figure out and strategise how to bring down the Government or bring down the trustees of the National Sports Centre, or worrying about Alfred Maybury, the Director of Child and Family Services? Check yourselves!

There comes a time when we have to have some honest conversations. And tonight I encourage people to look within and determine how you can really make a contribution, because our children are not hearing that story. Our children are hearing stories that are being told somewhere else—social media, porn sites. And to those who would like to perpetuate the myth that we do not hear, that this Government is not listening, I can speak from my perspective as a representative of this Government.

Because when Christine [DaCosta], who was the victim of what we call a luring offence during her time in Mount Saint Agnes, came to my office and advocated for change—done. We amended the Criminal Code.

When our young Black men were disenfranchised in the jury selection system in criminal trials, guess what? We changed the laws to ensure fairness.

When our young people could not get a pupillage, we gave them pupillage. We made sure they were protected. We did revenge porn legislation. We revitalised Law Reform Commission.

I do not need to go down the list. We chose to diversify the economy by introducing cannabis legislation. And to those of you who cheered when it was stalled in the Senate, guess what? Round two is coming. Round two is coming! Because it is necessary.

So I say to all of you—and I am not going to be all night; I am not going to be all night—that there comes a time when we need to put the energy where it belongs. I think we are all missing the mark. So kudos to those of you who are in the community working, but guess what? Our outreach cannot be limited to a plate of food. Okay? Our outreach cannot be limited to the superficial. It cannot be. To those of you who pretend that there is a groundswell of protest when you go out canvassing, I have not experienced that. It does not exist where I am.

The Acting Speaker: Madam Attorney General, not to interrupt, but you have one minute.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: Oh, my gracious!

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Kathy Lynn Simmons: So to my Parliamentarians, to our community members, get it right. Spend your energy where it needs to be spent, because we will continue to emulate the characteristics of our forefathers—the resilience, the strength and the forbearance.

Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Madam Attorney General.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that the Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: It is, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I cannot see you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am sorry.

The Acting Speaker: The camera is trained on the Attorney General for some reason.

Hon. E. David Burt: No problem. It is probably still moved by her very eloquent maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker: Oh, now I see. Yes.

Now, Premier, I have to caution you. Make sure you use parliamentary language even though it is Cup Match, and any utterances of red-and-blue might meet with my wrath.

Hon. E. David Burt: I do not have to utter red-and-blue, Madam Acting Speaker. You can see me wearing it!

[Laughter]

CUP MATCH—ADHERE TO PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Acting Speaker, I will too be brief because there is very little to be said after the Honourable Attorney General just spoke. But I am grateful for her service. I am grateful for the service of my Parliamentary and Cabinet colleagues because this job is not easy. But as she said, we have to up

our game. We know that we are in contact on the doorsteps around the country, and we must continue to make sure that we communicate. Because though times are tough and things will get worse before they get better, as is the case with the economic pandemic that will follow the health pandemic, we must be resilient. We must be committed to actually changing, transforming things and not just dealing with things at the superficial level. So I am grateful for her contribution, and I am grateful for her message.

The only thing I want to wish people of this country, Madam Acting Speaker, is a very happy and safe Emancipation Day, a very happy and safe Mary Prince Day. And it is my hope and prayer that we adhere to the public health guidelines and that we conduct ourselves in a way that ensures that we can continue to enjoy the relative success of which we have had recently.

So with that, Madam Acting Speaker, I wish you good night, and I wish good night to all of our parliamentary colleagues and this country. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Thank you.

That ends our session this evening. I will see you all back bright and early in September. Have a great holiday, all.

[At 7:00 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 10 September 2021.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
2020/2021 SESSION**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
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