

2025/26 SESSION
of the

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

6 NOVEMBER 2026

(*Sitting number 45 of the 2025/2026 Session)*

(pages 3771-3862)

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

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6 NOVEMBER 2026
10:03 AM

Sitting Number 45 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

Once the Sergeant puts the rod across, we will have prayers by Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Clerk will lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 25 September 2026 and 2 October 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from 25 September and 2 October [2026] have been circulated.

Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed and printed.

[Minutes of 25 September 2026 and 2 October 2026 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: We have been informed that two Members will be absent today. Minister Dill and MP Weeks have both indicated their absence.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: There are 11 Papers this morning. The first is by the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present . . . the first two, or the first three, are by the Premier, I believe. No, no, there's more than that.

You've got quite a few of them there, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have a stack in front of me.

The Speaker: I see the list here.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if you will, I apologise, I may not go in complete order, but I promise you I will introduce them all.

The Speaker: Okay. Go right ahead.

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

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Information Commissioner 2025 Annual Report as required by section 58(1) of the Public Access to Information Act 2010.

BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP REGULATIONS 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Beneficial Ownership Regulations 2026 in exercise the powers conferred by section 27 of the Beneficial Ownership Act 2025.

BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP EXEMPTION ORDER 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Further, Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Beneficial Ownership Exemption Order 2026 in exercise of the powers

conferred by section 15(4) of the Beneficial Ownership Act 2025.

BERMUDA PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD (BPAB) AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Bermuda Public Accountability Board Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 March 2026.

BERMUDA PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD (BPAB) ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. E. David Burt: And further, Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the 2026 Bermuda Public Accountability Board Annual Report. This report is submitted in accordance with sections 14 and 15 of the Bermuda Public Accountability Act 2011.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27

Hon. E. David Burt: And finally, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the powers conferred by section 96 of the Bermuda Constitution Order [1968], I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly, Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for Financial Year 2026/27.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

DRAFT LEASE AGREEMENT RELATING TO SHIPS WHARF, ST. DAVID'S ROAD, ST. GEORGE'S DD03 BETWEEN BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION AND SOUTHSIDE HOLDING LTD.

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

I have the honour on behalf of the Deputy Premier and Minister of Housing and Municipalities, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Draft Lease Agreement between Bermuda Land Management Corporation and Southside Holding Ltd., referencing the property known as Ships Wharf (also known as Marginal Wharf), St. David's Road, St. George's, comprising approximately 297,540 square feet, 6.83 acres, as shown edged red on the annex plan and described in Schedule 1, attached to the lease for a 66-year term.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Minister.

AUXILIARY BICYCLES (PROJECT RIDE) REGULATIONS 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Auxiliary Bicycles (Project Ride) Regulations 2026, as made by the Minister responsible for Transport in exercise of the power conferred by sections 9AB(4), 30, and 31 of the Auxiliary Bicycles Act 1954.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next this morning is in the name of the same Minister.

Would you like to continue, Minister?

MOTOR CAR (RIDESHARING) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Regulations 2026, as made by the Minister responsible for Transport in exercise of the power conferred by sections 37 and 102 of the Motor Car Act 1951.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Minister.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Home Affairs, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Consumer Affairs Annual Report 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And the final one this morning is in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors.

Minister.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly, the Department of Financial Assistance Annual Report 2025/26.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that's the end of the Papers and Communications to the House this morning.

We will now move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have five Statements this morning.

The first is in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Minister, Premier.

MID-YEAR REVIEW 2026/27: STRONGER FINANCES, MEANINGFUL RELIEF, GREATER INVESTMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, last month in this Honourable House, I provided an update on the Government's financial performance for fiscal year 2025/26. At that time, I outlined the progress made in strengthening Bermuda's public finances since this Government took office in 2017, moving from persistent annual deficits to consecutive budget surpluses, while we reduced taxes for workers and invested in essential services and Bermuda's infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I also indicated that when we returned to this Honourable House in November, I would provide an update on the current fiscal year. Today, I rise to set out the Government's latest financial projections for fiscal year 2026/27 and the progress we continue to make in responsibly managing Bermuda's finances.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's latest assessment projects total revenue for fiscal year 2026/27 of $2.09 billion, which is approximately $61.9 million above the original budget estimate of $2.02 billion. This increase is principally driven by corporate income tax receipts, which are now projected at $800 million, which is $46.8 million above the original estimate, and payroll tax receipts of $650 million, which are coming in and tracking $15 million above budget.

Mr. Speaker, current account expenditure is projected at $1.26 billion, which is approximately $14.5 million above the original estimate due to supplementary funding approved earlier this year, while capital expenditure remains on track at $182 million. Interest and guarantee management costs are projected at $124.8 million, in line with the original budget.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: And therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government is projecting a budget surplus of $520 million for fiscal year 2026/27, which is $47.3 million above the original estimate of $472.7 million.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, it's coming. Hold on. It's coming!

An Hon. Member: I'll wait for it.

Another Hon. Member: We're listening.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, everyone—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, everyone is excited.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this projection includes the supplementary estimate approved by this Honourable House in July, supporting Bermuda College, the Department of Corrections and the purchase and initial renovations of Compass Point. Our capital programme also includes $16.4 million for affordable housing through the Bermuda Housing Corporation, $12 million for the Bermuda Hospitals Board, $9.4 million for Swing Bridge and $8.8 million for the Tynes Bay expansion and replacement.

These figures demonstrate that we are continuing to manage expenditure responsibly while investing in Bermuda's infrastructure and public services. And at the same time, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will repay $605 million of Bermuda's debt in January.

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Since this Government returned to office, it has been our commitment that stronger public finances will not simply stop at celebrating larger surpluses on government balance sheets. We have continually said that improved fiscal performance must translate into tangible benefits for Bermudians. And most importantly, we have backed what we said with action.

Madam Deputy Speaker, throughout the last nine years, this Government has taken action to provide relief to families with reductions in payroll taxes which have brought taxes on workers to the lowest level in history. We have also implemented reduced or eliminated customs duty on essential goods and fuel, alongside additional investment in critical social needs.

As our financial position has strengthened, we have continued to provide further relief, most recently through the decision to again freeze fuel prices to

protect households and businesses in Bermuda from record high global gas prices.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government recognises that the cost of living remains a significant challenge for many households. That is why when this Honourable House last met in October, I also promised that upon our return, I would announce further measures of relief in keeping with this Government's commitment to share the benefits of stronger financial performance and provide more relief to the people of Bermuda. Some of these changes were intended to come into effect earlier this year; however, the Government wanted to ensure it had the funds to repay the $605 million in debt that this Government will retire next month.

Therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, today as part of the Government's mid-year review, I am pleased to announce more relief through further tax reductions, alongside additional investment in the services and programmes that directly improve the lives of Bermudians.

Madam Deputy Speaker, effective 1 January 2027, the Government will reduce payroll taxes for every worker in Bermuda.

An Hon. Member: What?

Hon. E. David Burt: These changes will reduce tax bills up to $1,560 a year, putting more money back into the pockets of hardworking Bermudians at a time when household budgets remain under pressure. No one working in Bermuda will pay more in taxes and will mean that the average worker in Bermuda will be paying about $2,500 less a year in payroll taxes, compared to their tax bill under the former One Bermuda Alliance Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government will also reduce the employer payroll tax by half a percentage point for all categories, providing relief to businesses of all sizes. Additional concessions will extend the reduced rate for restaurants to takeaway food establishments, while registered trade unions and licensed credit unions will also benefit from a reduced rate equivalent to the Bermuda Hospitals Board and municipal corporations.

Additionally, we will provide land tax exemptions for sporting and social clubs.

[Madam Deputy] Speaker, many families rely on their cars to transport their loved ones around the Island, but we all know the high prices for vehicles is largely due to a tax put in place over 30 years ago that hasn't changed. From 1 January, in line with recommendations from the bi-partisan Tax Reform Commission, customs duty will be reduced to 50 per cent on the first $20,000 of value, reducing the import duties on private cars by up to $12,500.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government is confident these measures will provide meaningful relief for workers, businesses, and community organisations, as we build on the tax reductions this Government has delivered over successive budgets.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, while reducing taxes is helpful, we must also continue to invest. Today, the Government is pleased to announce an additional $19.5 million in expenditure for fiscal year 2026/27 (in the Supplementary Estimate which I tabled earlier today), directed towards platform commitments and urgent needs identified across our community. These investments will support health care, housing, education, public safety, social development, and our community organisations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an additional $2.8 million, will be allocated to the Ministry of Health to support the introduction of a mobile health clinic, expansion of harm prevention programmes, additional support for those requiring overseas medical treatment, and essential upgrades to medical equipment and technologies at our government facilities.

The Ministry of Housing and Municipalities will receive an additional $2.5 million for solar installations in Bermuda Housing Corporation homes; and a further $1.95 million will be allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs to expand the balcony solar programme. These investments will provide more access to Bermudian families and seniors to renewable energy, leading to a reduction in their electricity costs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an additional $2.2 million, will be allocated to the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors to address critical social needs. This includes funding for a children's group home, additional support for youth programmes, expansion in services for our seniors and financial backing for the Government's Plan to End Homelessness.

The Ministry of Education will receive an additional $2 million for increased funding to The Berkely Institute, upgrades to CedarBridge Academy, the purchase of Sandys 360 to support the Signature School at Sandys Secondary, additional funding for scholarships and funding to deliver on our platform promise to provide baby boxes to the parents of newborn children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an additional $2.6 million, will be allocated to the Ministry of National Security to strengthen public safety and law enforcement capabilities. This will mean more tools for our police to tackle crime, improved detection equipment at our border for Customs, upgraded protective equipment for our firefighters, and modernised facilities at the Royal Bermuda Regiment.

The Ministry of Justice will be allocated an additional $1.7 million to commence the implementation of recommendations arising from the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses, progressing work on Bermuda's wrongful convictions' framework, and to boost funding [to] the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an additional $1.2 million, will be allocated through the Cabinet Office, including $500,000 to provide even more capital

development grants for community and sporting organisations, a boost to funding for Public Service Bursaries, and support for faster recruitment in the public service

A further $1 million will be allocated to the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, to provide additional funding to sporting bodies in Bermuda,—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: —to support the purchase of equipment for our community fields, while an additional $850,000 will be allocated to the Ministry of Public Works and Environment to give my honourable colleague, the Minister of Public works, more capacity to support requests for neighbourhood beautification projects from Honourable Members, while providing more funding for environmental protection.

An Hon. Member: St. George's says thank you.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, an additional $680,000 will be allocated to the Ministry of Economy and Labour to expand graduate trainee programmes, bursaries and scholarships, and hospitality training while providing even more support to entrepreneurs. The BEDC will receive an additional grant to deliver more community commercial kitchens.

And finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, $100,000 will be allocated to the Ministry of Finance to support financial literacy initiatives which this Government promised in our Election Manifesto.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the investments I have outlined today reflect the commitments this Government made to the people of Bermuda during the last election. From health care [and] housing to education, public safety and support for our young people, these are priorities that Bermudians have told us matter to them. This Government is now demonstrating our capacity to deliver on those commitments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some may ask why we are introducing further tax relief and additional investment at this point in the fiscal year. The answer is straightforward. The stronger financial position we have built over the last nine years has given us the capacity to do more, and the people of Bermuda should not have to wait to benefit from that progress.

The people of this country expect their Government to listen to them, understand the challenges they face and take meaningful action to address them. That is what they voted for in February 2025, and that is what we are delivering through this mid-year review as we fulfil the commitments we made to the people of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I prepare to conclude my tenure as Premier and Minister of Finance, I am proud that Bermuda is in a stronger financial position than when we assumed office. But the true measure of that progress is the difference it makes in the lives of Bermudians, both today and in the years ahead.

From 1 January, workers will keep more of what they earn. Whether they use that money to meet household expenses, spend in our local shops or save for the future, the choice will be theirs. Local businesses will also pay less in tax, giving them more room to invest and grow.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we promised that stronger public finances would bring tangible benefits to the people of Bermuda. Today, we are keeping that promise: lowering taxes, investing in the services our people rely on and ensuring that the progress we have made is felt in every home across our Island.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Premier, and now the Speaker will resume his seat.

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

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

Minister.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the Department of Financial Assistance (DFA) Annual Report for 2025/26 to this Honourable House and, in doing so, to report on this Government's continued commitment to standing with Bermudians in their time of need.

In compliance with section 3(4) of the Financial Assistance Act 2001, the report has been made publicly accessible for viewing. The report covers the fiscal year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Mr. Speaker, this Government believes that a fair and compassionate society is measured by how it supports its most vulnerable: our seniors, persons with disabilities, working families, and those facing hardship. During the 2025/26 fiscal year, the Department of Financial Assistance delivered $52.19 million in support through the Financial Assistance Programme, the Child Day Care Allowance Programme and the Short-Term Relief Benefit Programme. That is a significant investment in the wellbeing of Bermudians, and this Annual Report demonstrates that the investment is delivering results.

Highlights of the Report include:

- Increased support for Bermudians, with total payments across the Financial Assistance, Child Day Care Allowance and Short-Term Relief Benefit programmes rising by 1 per cent.
- More Bermudians supported, with the average monthly number of persons receiving financial assistance rising by 3 per cent to 2,045.
- More working families and children supported, with the average number of children covered by the Child Day Care Allowance Programme rising to 272 per month.
- Meaningful reform for our seniors, with the pension income excluded from the calculation of financial assistance awards increased from $500 to $800.
- Greater accessibility, through the introduction of a digital Short-Term Relief Benefit application form.
- Stronger protection of the public purse, with more than 81,900 transactions monitored and strengthened fraud detection, staff training and compliance.
- Greater accountability, with outstanding debt arising from investigations reduced by 62 per cent, to $109,881.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is committed to our seniors, and this reform demonstrates that commitment in action. Honourable Members will recall that the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 were amended to increase the amount of pension income excluded from the calculation of financial assistance awards from $500 to $800. Without this change, Mr. Speaker, an increase in a senior's pension could be offset by a reduction in their financial [assistance] award. This reform ensures that when this Government increases pension benefits, our seniors feel the benefit—and that those increases translate into real improvements in their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, behind every figure in this report is a Bermudian, a neighbour, a parent, a senior, who has been able to rely on this Government for support.

For the fiscal year 2025/26, the average number of persons receiving financial assistance was 2,045 per month, compared to 1,977 in the prior fiscal year. This 3 per cent increase is mainly attributable to growth in the "pensioner" category, which increased by 48 persons, and the "earnings low" category, which increased by 22 persons. Encouragingly, the increase in the "earnings low" clients partly reflects individuals moving from the able-bodied [unemployed] category into employment. That is precisely the outcome this Government seeks: assistance that serves as a bridge to work and greater independence. Pensioners and persons with disabilities continue to represent the largest proportion of financial assistance recipients, and this Government will continue to ensure that they are supported with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, total expenditure for the Financial Assistance Programme was $49.58 million, an increase of 1 per cent, or $0.32 million, from $49.26 million in the prior fiscal year. Let me be clear: this increase is primarily [attributable] to this Government's reform measures, including the increase in the excluded income threshold for pensions and other benefits, which resulted in increased awards for clients, particularly pensioners and persons with disabilities. This is public money directed where it matters most—to the essentials. The highest items of client expenditure were rent (28 per cent), nursing home fees (18 per cent), FutureCare insurance (15 per cent), food allowances (15 per cent), the health insurance plan (9 per cent), rest home fees (9 per cent) and medication (6 per cent).

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry understands that working parents should not have to choose between earning a living and ensuring their children are well taken care of. The monthly average number of children covered by the Child Day Care Allowance in 2025/26 was 272, compared to 265 in the prior fiscal year. This represents an increase of 7 children, or approximately 5 per cent. The Programme helps parents remain in employment while ensuring that their children have access to quality early childhood care, an investment in both today's workforce and the [next] generation of Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, life can change in an instant, and unexpected hardship can affect any family. That is why the Short-Term Relief Benefit was introduced under the Financial Assistance (Short-Term Relief Benefit) Act 2024, providing eligible persons experiencing sudden and unforeseen financial hardship with temporary assistance of up to $1,500 per month, for a maximum of three months. During the fiscal year, payments under the Programme totalled $20,000, awarded to eight recipients.

We want every Bermudian who qualifies to know that this support exists and to be able to access it with ease. That is why, effective 1 February 2026, the Department introduced a digital application form for the Short-Term Relief Benefit, enabling persons to apply online, while manual application forms remain available for those who are unable to access or complete the online application. The Ministry will continue to review the Programme to ensure that it is accessible to, and meets the needs of, those it was designed to support.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is equally committed to ensuring that every dollar of public money is spent appropriately and reaches those who genuinely need it. During 2025/26, transaction monitoring was performed on 81,905 line transactions within the Financial Assistance System Software and the Government's financial system, to ensure compliance with the Department's legislation. The Department's investigative officers received, on average, nine tips per month. The Department also finalised the documentation of its fraud typologies and delivered related training to all staff, providing officers with a standardised framework to identify fraud patterns, emerging trends and potential

red flags. This initiative is expected to strengthen early detection and prevention and [reduce] the incidence of overpayments.

Mr. Speaker, those who abuse the financial assistance system take from those who need it most, and this Government will not tolerate it. The Department works closely with the Attorney General's Chambers to recover overpayments made as a result of fraud and abuse. During the reporting period, sixteen client cases valued at approximately $82,996 were referred to the Attorney General's Chambers for legal restitution. I am pleased to report that outstanding debt arising from investigations was reduced by 62 per cent, to $109,881, a clear demonstration of accountability in action.

Mr. Speaker, financial assistance is [about] more than payments; it is about people. The Department's financial assistance social workers continue to streamline internal processes and improve the delivery of social services. They reinforced and expanded collaboration with government departments and community partners, including social workers at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital, Ageing and Disability Services, the Salvation Army and the Department of Health. Their work includes case conferences, referrals, individual counselling, support for overseas medical transfers, and site visits to rest and nursing homes, helping to ensure that clients are served in safe and healthy environments and receive quality care.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, the Department ensured that all financial assistance, child day care allowance and short-term relief benefit clients were serviced without interruption and in adherence to its legislative and policy framework. On behalf of the Government and the Ministry of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors, I extend my sincere thanks to the Director and the dedicated staff of the Department of Financial Assistance, and to all of our partners. Their commitment ensures that Bermudians in need can access essential support to maintain a minimum standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, this Government's vision is clear. Financial assistance must be a pathway to independence, a bridge to gainful and sustainable employment, and a safety net that protects our seniors, persons with disabilities, and families, with dignity. We will continue to advance financial assistance reform, expand access through digital services and strengthen the integrity of our programmes, so that support reaches those who need it most. This Government will continue to put the needs of Bermudians first.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Financial Assistance 2025/26 Annual Report is available online at gov.bm, and hard copies will be available at the Ministry of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors Headquarters, Veritas Place, 6th Floor, 65 Court Street, Hamilton, and at the Department of Financial Assistance, Global House, 1st Floor, 43 Church Street, Hamilton.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning by a Minister is from the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister Hayward, would you like to present your statement now?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning, Minister.

BERMUDA'S ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DRIVERS

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an overview of Bermuda's economic and employment drivers to foster understanding of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that the people of Bermuda understand how our economy works, where our economic wealth is generated, and how economic activity supports employment.

Economic performance is often discussed in terms of percentages and billions of dollars. However, behind these figures are businesses, workers, entrepreneurs and families whose livelihoods depend on the strength of our economy.

Understanding our economy is therefore essential to understanding how we can create [greater] prosperity and opportunity for Bermudians.

Five Consecutive Years of Economic Growth

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that Bermuda has recorded five consecutive years of positive real economic growth, with an average annual growth rate of 3.8 per cent between 2021 and 2025.

The annual real GDP growth rates were as follows:

- 2021: 5.3 per cent
- 2022: 6.1 per cent
- 2023: 5.0 per cent
- 2024: 1.7 per cent
- 2025: 1.0 per cent

Mr. Speaker, these results demonstrate the resilience of Bermuda's economy and its capacity to sustain economic activity despite global uncertainty, inflationary pressures and changing international economic conditions.

In 2025, Bermuda's real Gross Domestic Product reached approximately $7.24 billion, an increase of $75 million from 2024. At current prices, GDP increased by 6.5 per cent to approximately $9.85 billion, representing an increase of nearly $599 million compared with 2024.

Mr. Speaker, Gross Domestic Product, commonly referred to as GDP, measures the total value of goods and services produced within an economy. Real GDP adjusts for price changes, providing a clearer

measure of actual economic growth. While the true size of the overall economy is reflected in nominal or current prices. The fact that Bermuda has recorded five consecutive years of positive real GDP growth demonstrates that our economy has continued to expand beyond the effects of rising prices. This sustained expansion provides an important foundation for continued investment, employment and economic development.

Understanding Bermuda's Five Largest GDP-Contributing Industries

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, an important part of understanding Bermuda's economy is recognising the industries that generate the greatest economic value.

According to the 2025 Annual GDP Report, Bermuda's five largest industries in current prices collectively contributed approximately 68.8 per cent of total economic output. These five industries also supported 13,750 filled jobs in 2025, representing approximately 40.7 per cent of Bermuda's total employment. This demonstrates the important role these industries play in generating economic activity and supporting livelihoods throughout our community.

First, international business. Mr. Speaker, international business remains Bermuda's largest economic industry. In 2025, international business contributed approximately $2.86 billion to Bermuda's economy, representing 29 per cent of total GDP. The industry also supported 5,070 filled jobs, an increase of 30 jobs compared with 2024.

International business is Bermuda's largest individual industry employer, accounting for approximately 15 per cent of all [filled] jobs. The industry provides employment opportunities for underwriters, actuaries, accountants, compliance professionals, executives, administrators, technology specialists and other professionals. Importantly, the benefits of international business extend beyond direct employment.

Second, financial and insurance activities. Financial and insurance activities contributed approximately $1.46 billion to GDP in 2025, representing 14.9 per cent of total economic output. The industry supported 1,895 filled jobs, representing approximately 5.6 per cent of total employment. Employment in this industry, however, declined by 70 jobs compared with 2024.

Financial and insurance activities provide employment for banking professionals, insurance specialists, investment managers, accountants, financial analysts and administrative professionals. The industry also supports the financial infrastructure necessary for investment, commercial activity and economic development.

The third largest sector is real estate activities. Real estate activities contributed approximately $1.31 billion to Bermuda's GDP in 2025, representing 13.3 per cent of total economic output. The industry supported 310 filled jobs, a decrease of 38 jobs compared with 2024.

Real estate includes property management, leasing, real estate services and the estimated rental value of owner-occupied homes. A significant portion of its economic value is associated with housing services and imputed rental values rather than direct employment.

Nonetheless, real estate remains an important component of Bermuda's economy and creates additional demand for construction, property maintenance, surveying, architecture and other supporting services. Its economic significance also reinforces the importance of increasing Bermudian homeownership and creating opportunities for property-based wealth accumulation.

The fourth largest sector is professional, scientific and technical activities. Professional, scientific and technical activities contributed approximately $636 million to GDP in 2025, representing 6.5 per cent of total economic output. The industry supported 2,419 filled jobs, an increase of 12 jobs compared with 2024.

This industry includes legal services, accounting, engineering, architecture, consultancy and other specialised professional activities. These are important industries for Bermudian career advancement because they provide opportunities for individuals to develop specialised qualifications, professional expertise and high-value skills. The industry is also closely connected with international business, as many internationally focused companies rely on local professional firms for legal, accounting, regulatory and advisory services.

The fifth largest sector, Mr. Speaker, is wholesale and retail trade. Wholesale and retail trade contributed approximately $504 million to Bermuda's GDP in 2025, representing 5.1 per cent of total economic output. The industry supported 4,056 filled jobs, an increase of 37 jobs compared with 2024. This represents approximately 12 per cent of total employment, making wholesale and retail trade one of Bermuda's largest employment industries.

The industry includes retail stores, wholesale distribution, vehicle sales and other commercial activities. It provides employment opportunities for sales professionals, store managers, purchasing officers, warehouse workers, administrative staff and business owners. Wholesale and retail trade is particularly important because of its direct connection to domestic economic [activity] and Bermudian entrepreneurship.

Understanding Bermuda's Five Largest Employment Sectors

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, having outlined the five industries that contribute the most to Bermuda's Gross Domestic Product, I believe it is equally important to highlight the industries that provide the greatest number of employment opportunities.

According to the Department of Statistics' 2026 Employment Briefs, based on the 2025 Employment Survey, Bermuda recorded 33,820 filled jobs in 2025, an increase of 369 jobs, or 1.1 per cent, compared with 2024.

Mr. Speaker, these are the five largest employment sectors:

First, international business activity, which supported 5,070 filled jobs, representing approximately 15.0 per cent of total employment. International business is therefore both Bermuda's largest contributor to GDP and its largest individual employment sector.

Second, wholesale and retail trade, which supported 4,056 filled jobs, representing approximately 12.0 per cent of total employment. This demonstrates the significant role that domestic commerce plays in supporting employment, entrepreneurship and economic participation.

Third, accommodation and food service activities, which supported 3,850 filled jobs, representing approximately 11.4 per cent of total employment. The sector added 63 jobs compared with 2024. This sector is particularly important because it provides employment across hotels, restaurants, catering establishments and other hospitality-related businesses. It also creates opportunities for Bermudian entrepreneurship and provides an important entry point into the workforce for many individuals.

Fourth is public administration, which supported 3,845 filled jobs, representing approximately 11.4 per cent of total employment. This was an increase of 116 jobs compared with 2024. Public administration plays an essential role in delivering government services, implementing public policy and maintaining the institutions that support Bermuda's economic and social development.

Fifth is human health and social work activities, which supported 2,732 filled jobs, representing approximately 8.1 per cent of total employment. The sector added 85 jobs compared with 2024. This sector includes health care professionals, care workers, social service providers and other essential occupations that support the well-being of our community.

Mr. Speaker, together, these five industries accounted for 19,553 filled jobs, representing approximately 57.8 per cent of total employment in Bermuda. All five of these industries recorded employment growth in 2025, collectively adding 331 filled jobs.

What is particularly important is that only two industries, international business and wholesale and retail trade, appear amongst both Bermuda's five largest GDP contributors in current prices and its five largest employment industries. This distinction provides an important insight into the structure of Bermuda's economy. The industries that generate the most economic value are not always the industries that employ the greatest number of people.

Some industries generate substantial economic output through specialised services, capital and productivity, while others support larger workforces through labour-intensive activities. We must continue to support our high-value international industries while also strengthening domestic sectors that provide substantial employment opportunities.

The Way Forward

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's economic performance over the past five years demonstrates that our economy has maintained a positive growth trajectory. Our leading industries continue to generate substantial economic value, while employment opportunities extend across a wide range of sectors.

The Government's Economic Development Strategy has provided a framework for strengthening our economic competitiveness, encouraging investment and supporting sustainable development. As we move forward, our economic priorities must continue to focus on diversification, workforce development, entrepreneurship and expanding Bermudian economic participation. A successful economy must provide Bermudians with opportunities to secure meaningful employment, advance professionally, establish businesses, purchase homes and build long-term wealth.

Mr. Speaker, understanding Bermuda's economy allows us to better appreciate both our economic strengths and the opportunities that exist for future development. It also reinforces the importance of ensuring that our economic policies are focused not only on increasing output, but on expanding Bermudian opportunity. Because, ultimately, the true measure of Bermuda's economic success is not simply the wealth our economy generates, but the extent to which that wealth creates opportunities and improves the lives of our people.

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.

ASPHALT PLANT REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND ROAD PAVING PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, improving Bermuda’s roads remains a priority for this Government. Today, I rise to update this Honourable House on the replacement of our asphalt plant, explain the changes to the project, and outline how paving continues whilst that work progresses.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to say from the outset that the project to replace our asphalt plant has taken longer than expected. However, the revised arrangement, agreed in principle, with our supplier would provide Bermuda with a higher-value plant at no additional

cost. There have also been no additional costs incurred because of the delay, and the Government's existing plant continues to supply asphalt for ongoing roadworks.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin with why this investment was necessary.

In 2023, technical assessments confirmed that the Government's asphalt plant and supporting paving equipment were more than 20 years old and becoming increasingly unreliable. Breakdowns were more frequent, replacement parts were harder to obtain, and downtime was affecting our ability to pave consistently.

Improving our roads therefore required investment in the equipment used to both produce and lay asphalt.

In early 2024, an agreement was then reached with Astec Industries for a new asphalt plant and screening plant, together with a new milling machine, asphalt paver and material transfer vehicle commonly known as a shuttle buggy.

Mr. Speaker, the original target was to have the plant operational by April 2025. As preparations advanced, the time needed for site works, shipping, contractor availability, installation and testing led to a revised commissioning target of the first quarter of 2026. It should be noted that whilst the target for the new asphalt plant was revised, the new paving equipment arrived in Bermuda by May 2025.

Mr. Speaker, two subsequent developments affected the asphalt plant project further.

The first concerned the future of the Government Quarry in Hamilton Parish, where the replacement plant is to be installed. The owners of the adjoining Rosewood property expressed interest in the Quarry site as part of possible expansion plans. Before proceeding with any further discussions, the Government agreed to facilitate an independent assessment of the costs and practical implications of potentially relocating Quarry operations. In November 2025, aspects of the plant project were temporarily paused while that assessment was undertaken and therefore installation activities were paused and contractors were demobilised.

Mr. Speaker, we were preparing to install infrastructure expected to serve Bermuda for decades and so continuing with installation while the future of the Quarry operations was being assessed would not have been prudent as it could have meant paying for work that later needed to be repeated or relocated.

The assessment concluded in April 2026 without a viable arrangement. I want to be clear, no agreement to relocate the Quarry was reached, no transaction occurred, and no decision was made to move it. The Government was therefore able to proceed at the existing site.

The second, and most recent, development arose after preparations resumed. Astec advised the Ministry of technical concerns with the particular asphalt plant model originally purchased. According to Astec, those concerns became apparent through the operation of the same model in other jurisdictions. The company advised that this information was not known to them when our original purchase agreement was signed.

Astec brought the concerns to the Government's attention, and we now have reached an agreement in principle for a different asphalt plant. Astec advises that this replacement would ordinarily cost approximately $1.2 million more than the original model and that the additional plant cost will not be passed on to the Government.

Overall, this will allow Bermuda to obtain a higher-value plant at no additional cost.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to be clear that some components have already arrived in Bermuda. These components are required for both the originally purchased plant and the proposed replacement, so they remain suitable for the project and will not need to be shipped back. However, installation has not yet begun.

The remaining components of the replacement plant will need to be manufactured in Tennessee and then shipped to Bermuda. Once the amended agreement is signed and the manufacturing, shipping, installation and testing arrangements are confirmed, the Ministry will be in a better position to provide an updated schedule.

I recognise that residents want a firm completion date, particularly after earlier targets have changed. I will do my best to ensure the next date we provide reflects an achievable programme supported by confirmed arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to address directly whether the delays have resulted in additional costs to taxpayers. They have not. The components already received are stored on Government land and will be used in the replacement plant. The costs incurred to date would have been necessary for the project in any event. They are not additional costs arising from the delay.

Separately, Astec's proposed replacement arrangement means that the approximately $1.2 million difference in plant value will not be charged to the Government. The approved project budget will not increase as a result of these revised arrangements. These are two separate but important points: There have been no additional costs caused by the delay, and the proposed change of plant will result in the country receiving a higher valued plant at no additional cost.

Mr. Speaker, there is a separate equipment matter that I wish to provide an update on, and that is the material transfer vehicle, which is commonly referred to as the shuttle buggy. It arrived as part of the paving equipment delivered in May of 2025 and was originally purchased to complete the other paving . . . Sorry. It was originally purchased to complement the other paving equipment by improving efficiencies in certain designated areas.

During staff training and familiarisation, officers assessed how best to use the equipment on Bermuda's

roads. That work raised concerns about whether the shuttle buggy would deliver the operational value originally anticipated. Its operating weight is approximately twice that of the largest piece of paving equipment currently used by the Ministry. That weight is particularly relevant where roads are supported by ageing retaining walls or bordered by vulnerable infrastructure. Several recent wall failures, including along Middle Road, Smith's, and North Shore Road, Hamilton Parish, reinforced the need for a detailed assessment. Officers subsequently identified locations where use of the shuttle buggy would be constrained. Although it could operate successfully in some areas, those restrictions would significantly limit its usefulness across our road network. This explains why it is not being deployed Island-wide.

The Ministry therefore entered discussions with Aztec about returning it. Aztec has agreed in principle to accept the shuttle buggy at its original purchase price less shipping, inspection, and refurbishment costs. The estimated net credit is approximately $700,000. That amount remains an estimate subject to the final arrangements. It represents substantial value that would be recovered from equipment whose use in Bermuda would be limited.

Mr. Speaker, whilst these matters have been addressed, road paving in Bermuda has continued. The asphalt used for ongoing government paving works has been produced by the government's existing plant, which will continue supplying asphalt while the replacement project progresses. We also have a long-standing agreement with Surface Experts Ltd. to assist with supplying asphalt if the government plant is down. Further, Aztec has committed to helping us maintain the existing plant until the replacement is commissioned. These arrangements support the continuation of paving while we work towards bringing the new facility into operation.

Mr. Speaker, residents understandably judge progress by the condition of the roads they use. The equipment investment matters because it supports that work, but the Ministry has continued delivering improvements and will continue to do so. Over recent months, completed works have included resurfacing the eastbound lane of Middle Road in Warwick between Camp Hill and Longford Road, and sections of North Shore Road, including the Shelly Bay stretch. To support the construction of the new Swing Bridge, we have also undertaken paving works for the detour route, including Kindley Field Park, the baseball field parking area, Double Dip parking lot, the new Waller's Point mini-roundabout, and Southside Road. These completed projects demonstrate that the plant replacement and the ongoing paving programme are progressing alongside each other, and the delay to the new plant has not brought our efforts to a halt.

Mr. Speaker, the next stages of the paving programme will build on that progress. In Warwick, the Ministry will complete the resurfacing of Middle Road between Camp Hill and Longford Road by paving the westbound lane. Paving will also advance along Middle Road from the Lighthouse Road junction towards Camp Hill. In Hamilton Parish, the programme will continue progressing eastward from the entrance of Shelly Bay Beach to the Causeway. These works form part of the wider effort to improve roads across Bermuda. The replacement plant will strengthen our ability to sustain that effort by providing the modern infrastructure needed for a more reliable paving programme over the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that the public has waited longer than expected for the new asphalt plant, and thus residents deserve a clear explanation of what has changed. The revised arrangements would secure a higher value plant at no additional cost, while the proposed return of the shuttle buggy would recover substantial value for taxpayers. Our next task is to finalise those arrangements and confirm a realistic delivery and commissioning schedule.

I thank the Ministry's officers and road crews for keeping the paving programme moving, and Aztec for working with us toward a better outcome.

Mr. Speaker, every resident who travels to work, takes a child to school, or makes their way home has a stake in the condition of our roads. They should feel the benefit of this investment in their everyday commute. That is the standard we must deliver. Better roads today, supported by the equipment and capacity to maintain them for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister Darrell.

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

GARAGE COMPLIANCE PROGRAMME

Hon. Owen Darrell: Good morning. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the public about the government's Garage Compliance Programme, and the steps that the Transport Control Department [TCD] is taking to strengthen safety standards and accountability across Bermuda's garage industry.

Every garage, service station, body shop, detailing shop, and cycle repair business operating in Bermuda provides a service that the public depend on. Residents trust these businesses with their vehicles, and in many cases, with their safety every single day. It is Government's responsibility to ensure that trust is well placed.

Mr. Speaker, the Garages Licensing Act 2022 became operative on the 4th of November 2022. It established for the first time a comprehensive statutory

framework for the licencing and regulation of garages in Bermuda, covering six distinct categories of licence:

- a dealer garage;
- a cycle dealer garage;
- a cycle garage;
- a body and paint garage; and
- a detailing garage.

This initiative is first and foremost a public safety measure. Mr. Speaker, the Act sets clear specific standards for the equipment and conditions found in a working garage: stop-chucks and the locking safety legs required on vehicle lifts, the covers and guard-rails required on service pits, the partitioning and ventilation required of spray painting rooms, and the fire precautions, extinguishing apparatus, and first-aid equipment every licensed premises must maintain.

The Act also requires every automotive and cycle service technician working in this industry to be registered with the director of TCD. Mr. Speaker, these requirements exist for a simple reason: to protect the people who work in these premises every day, and the members of the public who rely on them.

Mr. Speaker, by ensuring that every garage operating in Bermuda is subject to consistent standards of licensing, inspection, and accountability, we are taking practical steps to create a safer environment for garage workers, for customers, and for the wider public.

I am pleased to inform this Honourable House that the TCD will open the application period for garage licensing on Tuesday, November 10, and will remain open until the 18th of December. Garage operators may apply online through the TCD website, where full guidance is on the requirements, the application process, and the supporting documentation is also available.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's approach throughout this process is, and will continue to be, one of collaboration rather than confrontation. We recognise that some operators will need time to prepare these inspections, obtain documentation, or make adjustments to their premises. TCD's intention is to work with garage operators, providing clear guidance and a reasonable opportunity to meet their obligations, rather than treating this as a purely punitive exercise.

Following the close of the application period, TCD will carry out site inspections against standardised, published inspection checklists, so that every applicant is assessed consistently and fairly, regardless of the size or nature of their operation. Where an inspection identifies a deficiency, TCD's first response will be guidance and a responsible and reasonable timeframe for correction, consistent with the measured, education-first approach that I have just described.

Mr. Speaker, every licensed garage must display its licence prominently at its premises, so that any member of the public can see at a glance that the business that they are dealing with meets Bermuda's licensing and safety standards. To build on this, TCD is also developing a public register for compliant garages, which will allow members of the public to confirm directly and independently that a garage is properly licensed. This register is about more than compliance, for its own sake. Mr. Speaker, it is intended to elevate professionalism across the industry to give the public greater confidence when choosing where to take their vehicle and ensure that the many garage operators who already meet or are working to meet these standards are recognised for doing so.

Mr. Speaker, TCD has also received a number of inquiries and concerns from the members of public regarding garages operating below the standard expected under the Act. This programme is in part a direct response to these concerns. A clear compliance framework, applied consistently across the industry, is the fairest way to address them. Fair to the public, fair to the many responsible operators already meeting the standard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear about what government is asking of garage operators at this stage. Operators should review the requirements of the Garages Licensing Act 2022 and guidance published on the TCD website. Operators should gather supporting documentation needed for their application and licence, including evidence of fire safety compliance, insurance and technician registration, and operators should submit their application within the current application period, which closes on December 18.

Mr. Speaker, TCD remains available to assist any operator with questions about process and will continue to publish guidance and respond directly to inquiries as the programme progresses. This initiative reflects the Government's wider commitment to modernising regulatory processes, strengthening oversight and ensuring that standards are applied consistently across the industry.

Mr. Speaker, it is also fundamentally about public confidence, ensuring that when a member of public takes their vehicle to a licensed garage in Bermuda, they can do so with confidence that the business meets established safety and professional standards.

Mr. Speaker, the Government looks forward to working constructively with the garage industry as the programme moves forward, and we thank garage operators in advance for their cooperation in helping us achieve consistent compliance standards across the Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers for this morning. We will now move on.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: I believe the Private Bills Committee has a report, and the Deputy Speaker will present that.

Deputy Speaker.

PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEE REPORT

ANTHEA INSURANCE LIMITED ACT 2026

HODLIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. ACT 2026

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker, to your Honour and to the 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 petitions together with the related Bills for the Acts listed here under and is satisfied that the Bills are Private Bills and that all the rules of both Houses having to do with Private Bills have been complied with. The Bills are entitled: Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026 and HODLife Insurance Company Limited Act 2026.

The committee recommends that the Bills entitled Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026 and HODLife Insurance Company Ltd. Act 2026 be accepted subject to agreed amendments. Subject to the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 above, 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 is respectfully submitted, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You are welcome.

The Speaker: Members, that is the only report from Committee today.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Before we move on, I would just like to acknowledge in the Gallery former Attorney General and Senator, Mr. Phil Perinchief. Nice to see you visiting us this morning.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Yes, thank you.

Now we will move on.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: And this morning we have questions from the Statements that were given today, and also written questions that were submitted. And we will do . . . for the listening audience, we deal with the written questions first and then the Statement questions from today's Statements. And all of that is done inside of our time clock. So, we will now set the time for the questions. We will start with the written question this morning.

And the first set of written questions is from MP Fahy to the Minister of Economy and Labour. And there are three questions, all three questions were requiring a written response, and yes, the written response has been supplied.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTIONS: WORK PERMITS

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of work permits issued by the Department of Immigration currently in force (as at 23rd September 2026) broken down by (i) each work permit type and length (i.e. standard one, two, three, four, and five year work permits, global entrepreneur permits, short-term permits, occasional permits, new business permits, periodic permits, fintech permits and family office permits) and (ii) if any standard work permits issued are in a restricted category, the job category to which the work permit relates?*

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the average number of days it has taken the Department of Immigration to issue each category of work permit (i.e. standard one, two, three, four, and five year work permits, global entrepreneur permits, short-term permits, occasional permits, new business permits, periodic permits, fintech permits and family office permits) from the time a work permit application is received by the Department of Immigration for each of the calendar years from 1st January 2022 to 31st August 2026?*

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of civil penalties imposed by the Chief Immigration Officer pursuant to section 71A of the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 ("the Act") for each year from 1st January 2018 to date, including the total amount of penalties associated with each civil penalty issued and to which part of 71A of the Act the penalty related(i.e. 71A(1)(a), 71A(b), 71A(c) or 71A(d)?*

The Speaker: The second set of questions, the written questions, is from MP DeCouto to the Premier and Minister of Finance. They are written and oral—yes, written and oral. The first require a written response, and the second two are for oral responses.

Have you received the written response to the first question? Yes? Okay.

Would you like to put the oral question, the second question that requires an oral response?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you and good morning, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTION: PUBLIC SECTOR SUPERANNUATION FUND REFORMS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: *Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please provide this Honorable House with the actuarial and financial analyses supporting the original Public Sector Superannuation Fund reforms as enacted by the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025, the changes enacted by the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, and the changes anticipated by the Premier's statement to the House on 25 September this year regarding the PSSF lump sum conversion factor?*

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA GOVERNMENT RECEIVABLES, INITIATIVES TO REDUCE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please inform this Honourable House which specific initiatives the Ministry of Finance is taking to collect or otherwise reduce the Bermuda government's receivables of over $456 million.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me start by answering the question in this fashion, is that the annual financial statements will always overstate the true amounts of receivables to the Government for the reason . . . or the true amount of receivables that are not expected or that may be, you know, outstanding, because of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the fiscal year ends on March 31. And at that point in time, payroll taxes which are due on April 15 accrue as an owing balance, but those are typically paid on April 15. That figure is always large and overstated, so it does not reflect the true amount of actual outstanding debt which may be long-term debt that the Government has to recover. And I want to make sure that is clear. It is something we stated multiple times.

I will just state, Mr. Speaker, that it was unfortunate that we have told that to the Accountant General on numerous occasions. The Accountant General continues to put out that figure without putting the context, that every year in April a significant amount of that money is collected. So, when we talk about the $456 [million], $190 million was collected just a few weeks later, and so I think I want to make sure that is put into context.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, that still leaves about $260 million of longer-term outstanding debt. The Ministry . . . and it is important to note that the Ministry of Finance has made progress on this. We do note that in consecutive budget statements we did set targets insofar as recovery of old debt and we had managed to exceed those targets in multiple years. But we are continuing to strengthen collection and management of government receivables through several specific initiatives.

First, the structured recovery process combines payment arrangements for minor notices, and letter before action, with formal enforcement where voluntary compliance is unachieved. By early October 2026, Mr. Speaker, 60 tax cases have been escalated to the Debt Enforcement Unit since January of 2025.

Second, the Smart Case Debt Management System is being used to improve tax debt case management, monitor collection activity, and support consistent follow-up. Recruitment and staff training also form part of the work to strengthen collection capacity.

Third, a full whole-of-Ministry, not just the Office of Tax Commissioner, but a whole-of-Ministry data review has been undertaken, and system improvements are being progressed to improve record quality and provide better information for managing receivables across the government. So, this is not just Office of Tax Commissioner, this is Social Insurance and other government departments as well.

The annual company strike-off process also provides an opportunity to contact companies with unpaid fees, confirm whether they remain operational, and to encourage outstanding payments. Work to identify and separate balances considered uncollectable helps direct collection resources towards amounts with realistic prospects of recovery. The Ministry's emphasis remains on securing payment of recoverable debt, strengthening timely follow-up, and improving the information used to manage outstanding balances.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Second question, okay. Put your second question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you.

QUESTION 2: PUBLIC TREASURY (ADMINISTRATION AND PAYMENTS) ACT 1969,

MINISTER'S AUTHORITY TO APPROVE WAIVERS OR DEFERRALS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please inform this Honourable House if the Ministry of Finance has considered changes to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 regarding the Minister's authority to approve waivers or deferrals of public money payments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, outside of the changes that were made, I believe in 2021, following the pandemic with validation Acts, which allow deferrals of payments, anything in law has been done. Have there been any further changes that have been considered? There have been discussions, but there's been no actual consideration of this. There is a long, ongoing discussion of whether or not there should be power to go ahead and to extinguish old debts which are deemed unrecoverable. That power does not currently exist in law, but it is not currently under consideration of the Ministry of Finance.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

No? Okay.

Members, that brings us to a close of the written questions from MP DeCouto.

The third set of questions is being carried over. They are from MP Ben Smith to the Minister of Education, but they are deferred until the next sitting.

The Speaker: The fourth set of written questions is from MP Linda Smith to the Minister of Works. All three require an oral response. So, would you like to put your first question?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and also recognising that some of the questions that I have asked have been answered in part by the Statement made by the Honourable Minister just a short while ago, but I do want to actually read out the questions as they are, so that the supplementary questions are put in the context of which they are intended, so thank you.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

QUESTION 1: ASPHALT PLANT UPDATE

Ms. Linda Smith: The first question is, in August of this year, the Minister of Public Works informed this Honourable House that the $5.2 million asphalt plant would arrive in Bermuda by the end of the summer. Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the status of the arrival and the installation of the new plant, which the Minister has done. And we have heard that the new plant will be even a newer plant, and we do not have a date for it yet, so that is fine.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: My question is, can you confirm that the plant that will be coming, a date we do not know yet, will in fact be located at the quarry, which was the original plan? And that would be my supplemental, my one supplemental on that question.

The Speaker: Basically, I am sitting here listening and allowing a little leeway because the Statement that was given provided a lot of the response to the oral question. So being that was stated there, I am allowing leeway for her to put the supplementary question now rather than go back over the answer we got earlier for the first question.

Go right ahead.

Hon. Jache Adams: The answer is, that is the plan, yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Further supplementary on that one, or do you want to go to the next question?

Ms. Linda Smith: A further supplementary on that question.

What has been the financial impact of the outsourcing that has needed to take place while we waited for the plant, and how much of that has included use of asphalt that is being manufactured by the government plant versus outsourcing?

Hon. Jache Adams: Can I ask just for a bit more clarity as to the question that is being asked, please?

The Speaker: I think that the question was basically because the plant isn't fully functional—

Hon. Jache Adams: That is not true.

The Speaker: —the asphalting that is being done, is it being supplemented by outside sources?

Ms. Linda Smith: Right, correct. My question is: We haven't received the new plant. We have been told in the past that the old plant needs to be replaced, that it does not function at what it should be, so my question is, what are we doing to top that up?

So, there must be some level of outsourcing that is going on, and what is that split between what the plant is able to provide, our plant, and the outsourcing that is required to get the jobs done that are currently in progress?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for clarity, the government asphalt plant is currently operating. It is sustaining our ongoing paving efforts.

So, in reference to outsourcing, what we do have is a contingency plan that, should it not work for any given period of time, we have an agreement with Surface [Experts] Ltd. to use their asphalt whilst the plant is down, but at the moment, the government plant is operational and is supporting our ongoing paving efforts.

The Speaker: That was your second, that was your two supplementals. Would you like to go on to your second question?

Ms. Linda Smith: I believe that the second question has been answered, so I'll go on to the third question, and then I do have some supplementals with that.

The Speaker: Sure.

QUESTION 3: ASPHALT PLANT UPDATE

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please inform the Honourable House what additional costs have been incurred on behalf of the taxpayer due to government delays and outsourcing, government delays in receiving the plant that we expected to have by now, and also the outsourcing that is taking place to pick up the pace and, where necessary, to supplement the supply of asphalt.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: I am sorry, can the Honourable Member please repeat that question? Sorry.

The Speaker: Member, could you repeat for the Minister?

Ms. Linda Smith: Sure. I was asking about what additional costs have been incurred on behalf of the taxpayer due to the government delays in receiving the asphalt plant and specifically relating to the cost of outsourcing versus work being done by Works and Engineering, and also the supplemental need for asphalt that may have been required during this period.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you.

I appreciate the Honourable Member for repeating her question.

To be clear, as I said in my Statement, in any reference to the delay of the asphalt plant, there has been no additional cost to the taxpayer.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes. My question would be, then, the cost of the asphalt that is being purchased to supplement what the plant can't make is . . . costs the same as what it costs the government to make the asphalt that it is providing. Is that correct?

The Speaker: I do not think . . . did you say you are buying it at the time? I thought you said that the current plant is still supplying it.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct.

The Speaker: Okay. I just needed that clarification.

He can provide the answer. I thought you said it works just fine.

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes. So, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear again. The current government asphalt plant is operational.

It is supporting our ongoing paving efforts. We do . . . I guess I am confused, then, what is the root of this question. I will repeat: the government plant is operational. It is currently working, producing asphalt that is supporting our paving efforts.

Ms. Linda Smith: Okay. My question is specifically about the outsourcing. And we do see a lot of outsourcing that is taking place.

And you did indicate that where it is necessary outsource resources are supplementing the asphalt that is needed. So, my question is what is the cost differential between what government is producing in terms of the projects themselves and the asphalt versus what it is costing for the outsourcing that is going on that we can see and that the Minister has already indicated is necessary to sometimes top up our need for asphalt to continue the projects that we have ongoing.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: So, I think, I want to be clear. The Government has the capacity to improve the pace of our paving efforts which is why the Government has outsourced, in particular, Surface [Experts] Ltd. to pave along Middle Road in Warwick. But that does not . . . that is a separate contract from our current operational means in terms of government paving.

So, it is not a lack of Government's ability to pave and therefore we are outsourcing. This is a space of because we are—

Ms. Linda Smith: A point of correction. I wasn't saying it was a lack of Government's ability to pave.

Hon. Jache Adams: What is a point of correction? What is a point of correction?

Ms. Linda Smith: I am asking . . . sorry?
Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, point of order.

The Speaker: Okay. Put your point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: I wasn't suggesting that it was a lack of Government's ability to pave. I do not—

Hon. Jache Adams: Can I get clarity on what the point of order is, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Linda Smith: I am trying to explain that. I am trying to explain that.

The Speaker: Well, just state what point of order you are rising on. Then give your clarification.

Ms. Linda Smith: Okay.

The Speaker: So, your point of order that you are rising on is you want to—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Ms. Linda Smith: Okay. The statement was misleading because that wasn't what I was inferring. I wasn't inferring that Government didn't have the ability to pave.

I was asking the question about there has been some supplemental outsourcing done and what is the cost differential between having it done by Government and having it done by an outsourced resource. That is my question.

Hon. Jache Adams: Great. Thank you. I appreciate the Honourable Member.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: So, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: —typically what happens is we do an assessment of the roads that we are being quoted on and thus asking or outsourcing out. At this point in time, I can't give you the exact dollar figure, but what I can say it is roughly and approximately 5 per cent more of what it would have cost had we, the Government, had done it ourselves. I hope that clarifies.

The Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Linda Smith: Could I ask maybe if the Minister could bring back some more information at a future point on that? Because it is 5 per cent of what we are not entirely sure. And then we also have to consider what was originally allocated in the budget for paving, which I believe was about $5 million.

So, what are the differentials there?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Linda Smith: And then my last supplemental question on my last question on this altogether is that: I was raised believing that there's no such thing as a free lunch. So, my question is, while we have heard that there are no additional costs, given what has happened with respect to the plant, the original plant, not coming and the new plant now having to be manufactured and we haven't moved forward with that. However, over that period of time, obviously, you know, there have been cost increases globally and specifically in energy and shipping costs and that kind of thing. So, one would expect that there have been some additional costs due to the delay of the equipment and additional costs with respect to the shipping and getting the new level, the new equipment that is now on its way or being manufactured to Bermuda.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: I want to thank the Honourable Member. There were two separate items. But going back to the questions, I will understand that the Member is referring to the asphalt plant.

As I said in my Statement, there has been no additional cost. We have a long-standing relationship with the manufacturer that dates back decades. It is a relationship that we have built.

They understand the position we are in, and they have agreed, in principle, to provide this new plant that is valued at $1.2 million more than what we have purchased at no additional cost. I will say that this agreement is in principle. We are still in the finalisation of said agreement and happy to advise the Honourable Member accordingly once those agreements have been finalised.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Mr. Speaker, would the Honourable Minister be able to tell us if the asphalt plant that we have been waiting for for this time had been on Island, would that asphalt plant have been able to do the work that has now been outsourced at the higher rate?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Just one second, Mr. Speaker. I think there are two separate things, Mr. Speaker. The reality is if the new asphalt plant was operational, we would be in a position to accomplish more efficient paving. But the ability and capacity to still outsource and accelerate our paving efforts would still exist and we would still proceed to do so.

Hon. Ben Smith: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, would the Honourable Minister then admit that if we had the new asphalt plant, which would be more efficient, there is now an added cost, which is what my colleague has been asking for, that now has happened because we do not have the asphalt plant.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: This is fun, and I am fine. There is no added cost. What we are doing is continuing our efforts, the Government. We have additional capacity now from a capital perspective to accelerate our paving efforts. Whether the asphalt plant was operational . . . or the new asphalt plant was operational or not, we would still be using or outsourcing to accelerate those efforts. So, we are talking about separate things. Right?

There is an ongoing Government effort, but whether the asphalt plant, the new asphalt plant was operational or not, we would still be outsourcing our paving efforts to accelerate and get roads paved as quickly as we possibly can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Minister gave an answer that the third-party service provider was a certain percentage more. I could not hear if he said 5 [per cent] or 25 [per cent].

Thank you.

The Speaker: Five.

Hon. Jache Adams: I appreciate it. It was 5 [per cent].

The Speaker: No further supplementaries. No further questions. That brings us to an end of the written section of questions for this period. I will now move on to questions that have been generated from the Statements that were given this morning.

The first Statement this morning, Premier, your Statement, has questions from the Shadow Finance Minister.

Shadow Minister, would you like to put your questions to the Minister?

QUESTION 1: MID-YEAR REVIEW 2026/27: STRONGER FINANCES, MEANINGFUL RELIEF, GREATER INVESTMENT

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

The Premier stated that there will be an additional $2.5 million for solar installations in Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] homes. Based on the recent BELCO changes, I presume people with these solar panels feeding to their homes will be paying this $150 fee. Can the Premier confirm that the residents of the BHC homes that are fed by these solar panels will be paying this $150 fee or not?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: I cannot confirm one way or the other. Those matters will be dealt with by the Ministry of Housing and the implementation matters that are there. But I will remind the Honourable Member that, of course, we will have Committee of Supply the next time we are here so he can pose direct questions to the Deputy who will be carrying that particular brief when the supplementary aspect is discussed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Does the Premier accept that it has been shown that for many people with small solar panel systems, and my presumption is that the BHC systems will be relatively small per residence, often cause people to have higher BELCO bills after the $150 (approximately) fee that solar users have to pay?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would say that Standing Orders do not allow Ministers to speculate, so I will not speculate on that. That is not my area of expertise.

The Speaker: Further supplementary or—

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

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: MID-YEAR REVIEW 2026/27: STRONGER FINANCES, MEANINGFUL RELIEF, GREATER INVESTMENT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier stated that $1.95 million will be allocated to expand the balcony solar programme. My understanding is that balcony solar is not currently permitted under the current power generation regulations in Bermuda.

Can the Finance Minister please explain why they are funding a programme that is not currently allowed by our electricity generation regulations?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on the specifics in regard to regulation, but what I will say is that when it comes to making sure that we provide additional renewable energy and ways for persons, investments, and others to expand the programmes we are using, the government will respond in that fashion, and that is what we have done. I am happy to debate those matters next week.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Further supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: To stipulate that I am personally a fan of solar and the party, the OBA, believes it is an important part of the energy generation situation, subject to various complications.

Can the Premier explain why they have not fixed the laws to allow this programme to happen that they are going to pay for?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave moments ago.

The Speaker: All right.

Third question. None? Okay. Thank you.

Premier, that is the questions for your Statement.

We will now move on to the Statement from the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors. Minister MP Tucker would like to put a question to you.

MP.

QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My questions are all very basic. The first one is: Does the Ministry have a strategy for reducing dependence, a specific strategy for reducing dependency on financial assistance? It is good that there is help available, but I am increasingly concerned that the needs are growing. So, I am just wondering if the Ministry has a specific strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The Department of Financial Assistance is a social safety network . . . I am sorry, social safety net for the people who require financial support.

As outlined in the annual report, we still maintain that the majority of persons who are utilising the financial assistance benefit are pensioners and persons with disabilities. Pensioners, we all know, are on fixed incomes, which would restrict their ability, you know, to make extra income. Most of those persons are also persons who we fund due to the cost of rest homes and nursing homes.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. The supplementary is, is there a strategy for people who are not seniors or people who have disabilities?

I am just wondering, again, whether there is . . . it appears that we are creating or encouraging, maybe indirectly, a dependence on financial assistance. So, there has to be some kind of incentive to get people off. So, I am wondering if the Ministry has a strategy to address that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I will reiterate: The majority of persons who are on financial assistance are pensioners and persons with disabilities. We have a very low number of persons who are able-bodied, unemployed. Actually, 74, 75 was the number from 2024 to 2025 and all [of] 2025 to 2026. We have also reported that that category has been, that our low earners category has, that number has increased because the low employment . . . sorry, unemployed persons have gained some type of employment. So that has indeed been a stepping stone and strategy to not allow persons to remain dependent on financial assistance. But we have to, as a country, be able to provide a social safety net for those persons who cannot afford the services of nursing homes and rest homes.

The Speaker: Supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Ms. Robin Tucker: The second question is: I would like to know if the Minister or the Ministry (I should say) has done any work with the Ministry of Justice to assess how much financial assistance expenditure could potentially be reduced if court ordered child support payments were fully collected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: No, Mr. Speaker. The only thing I can speak to is the fact that financial assistance with the Child Day Care Allowance does, and financial assistance also does its due diligence in checking to see whether or not persons are receiving child maintenance. So, we do work in that aspect. But I am trying to understand the question a little bit more.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I am trying to understand the correlation.

The Speaker: Would you like to clarify a bit for the Minister?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, so Mr. Speaker, there are parents who are on financial assistance that have uncollected, have not been collecting their child support payments. Although the courts have assigned them to receive, not everyone is receiving. So, all I am asking is whether the Ministry has done any work with the Ministry of Justice to see if that gap can be closed, because at the end of the day, it is a financial safety net, and that makes sense, and it is appreciated. However, this is also taxpayer money. So, we need to make sure that any potential leakages are closed, and this, to me, would be sort of a very low-hanging fruit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

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

I would encourage that Member to pose a question to the Ministry of Justice. It does sound like there needs to be some understanding or processes within the child maintenance, which does fall under the Ministry of Justice.

Financial Assistance, again, does its due diligence in checking to see whether or not child maintenance is collected in their assessment of checking whether or not someone qualifies for financial assistance or the child daycare allowance.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: This is the third question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 3: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would just like to know if the Minister would agree that parental responsibility should be the first line of support for a child before reliance on financial assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: That is a personal opinion, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I believe that parental responsibility should be the first line.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, a supplementary. In the Minister's capacity as the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors, would she be able to answer that question in her capacity and not necessarily in her personal capacity?

The Speaker: Minister. [The Member] is just trying to find out if your views differ from your . . . the professional and your personal views.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: My view is not different. The Government has a parental responsibility law that the Government views parental responsibility as being important.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is all my questions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, that is the end of the questions for your Statement.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement from the Minister of Works.

Minister, the Opposition Whip would like to put questions to you.

Opposition Whip? You still want to put your questions in reference to the asphalt Statement?

QUESTION 1: ASPHALT PLANT REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND ROAD PAVING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Honourable Member mentioned that the quarry, I believe it was [page] 1, that there was interest by the adjoining property, Rosewood.

What I would like to know first is when did Rosewood first show interest in the quarry property?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Approximately 2016.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I know the answer.

[Laughter]

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. I guess the answer is a bit disturbing. I was looking for the information because I have brought this up before and we were told by this Government while they were Government that there had been no interest.

I will find that information, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to hear that the Minister is mentioning 2016 is when the interest was shown. Thank you for the transparency there. So, my next …

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary, sorry. Supplementary.

Hon. Jache Adams: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Jache Adams: What I will say is the Honourable Member is perhaps misleading the House. We had issued, at least whilst I was Minister, a public statement stating clearly that there was interest.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, that is fine. I know what I am referring to. I'll find it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I will find. Yes.

It was by another Minister. Thank you. Yes.

So, I can understand why he might not know. It was clearly said in this House.

The Speaker: Fine. You can put your question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary.

The Speaker: You supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: During this assessment period . . . can the Honourable Member let us know, he mentions April that it was finished, but when did that assessment actually start for the change of use potentially for the property?

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: It started in the fall of 2025. Late fall of 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary or second question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary. Considering it was fall of 2025, why were the public then and this Honourable House not made aware that there was a possible change of use for property that taxpayers pay for? It is government property.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I have addressed that. We have issued a statement here. In fact, I believe we have actually made a statement in the House referencing that. To say that we have not informed the public is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My apologies. I should have rephrased that. When did he make the statement that this was going to be publicly looked at? Sorry, that it was going to be looked at as an assessment of change of use—

The Speaker: That he publicly made a statement—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —because he's saying that in fall of 2025, that is when they were looking at it. But when did he make the statement concerning that?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: You both agreed that the statement was made.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: He is just trying to find the timing.

Hon. Jache Adams: So, let me pull it back. I will wait and confirm whether it was an actual statement, and I can't remember. But what I can absolutely confirm is that there was a press release issued, and obviously that, in terms of when, will be in the public domain. But there was absolutely a press release sent out expressing the interests and what we were assessing and why.

The Speaker: He was asking the time. Can you remember the timeline? That is what the question was.

Hon. Jache Adams: I am sure if the Member looks it up, he will get a time stamp as to when it was issued, Mr. Speaker, in the public domain.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes. Thank you. Next question.

The Speaker: Second question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, second question

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: ASPHALT PLANT REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND ROAD PAVING PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

I am maybe not so excited or glad to see that even the Minister does not know when he put something out in the public domain.

So, my next question then is, he mentioned the shuttle buggy, which is also another point of contention of mine, because I know that I had asked questions, maybe not calling it the shuttle buggy, but what I would like to know is, and I made it public that this machine was a problem before I asked even the questions.

What was the cost of the number of walls that had to be repaired because we brought in a machine that could not handle the roads? Does he have an idea of the cost of these projects to replace the walls? We know where the walls are, but we do not have a total cost of what this shuttle buggy, bringing in a $700,000 project, to now have to send it back, [the] machine.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: First of all, let me say that I am surprised that the Opposition Whip could not take the time to look the statement up himself and find the date stamp of when that press release was issued, so that he himself does not have to waste the time of this House by looking it up.

[Inaudible interjections]

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

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: It is in the public domain.

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

Hon. Jache Adams: He started, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He is misleading the House.

Hon. Jache Adams: He started. He said if he doesn't have the time—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We just received it.

Hon. Jache Adams: Right? If he is not interested—

The Speaker: Members, Members, Members.

I do not necessarily like the word "waste of time" because remember the process of being a parliament is to scrutinise and to seek questions, to ask questions and to get information. It may sometimes mean asking the same question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That is right.

The Speaker: But it is not wasting time.

Hon. Jache Adams: It is not wasting time, Mr. Speaker. But I do question when I said that it was in the public domain, why now is a reference [made] of why I do not know when the date was. Look it up. Very simple.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You do not know the date. You actually do not know the date.

Hon. Jache Adams: Look, you can type in—

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah!

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: There is Google, right? Google, *When did the Minister say that there was interest in the quarry?* And a date will come up.

The Speaker: Opposition Whip, let the Minister respond.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay.

The Speaker: Now, is it a supplementary you want to put now to his response or your third question?

Hon. Jache Adams: No, no, Mr. Speaker. He did ask a question specifically. He did ask a question and what I will say is, Mr. Speaker, in my Statement I referred to the fact that the shuttle buggy has not been used. To sit here and ask: What was the cost of the damages as a result of the shuttle buggy? The answer would be zero.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The shuttle buggy caused damage to the roads. Walls came down.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.

Hon. Jache Adams: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Please tell me in my Statement where I said that the shuttle buggy was used?

The Speaker: Minister, just take your time. Take your time.

The Minister did say it has not been used because they found out it was (my words) too heavy, too heavy for certain roads in Bermuda, my words, that it is too heavy and would cause damage to our roads and supporting walls, et cetera, because of the weight.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: I do not remember in the Statement saying that it actually caused it. My recollection was that the technicians recognised it was potential problems, but I didn't hear him say it actually caused problems. I stand to be corrected.

Am I right or wrong, Minister?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, we used our new paving equipment, excluding the shuttle buggy. Whilst using the new paving equipment, excluding the shuttle buggy, damages occurred.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ah.

Hon. Jache Adams: Those damages triggered a further assessment on the shuttle buggy and thus it was deemed that the shuttle buggy was not best suited for or best value to use it going forward.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: So, there was damage. But it was not by the shuttle buggy.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct, 100 per cent.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: There you go. It was all in one paragraph. The Honourable Member has been very misleading.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Okay. Do you have a third question or are you satisfied?

Or, your Opposition Leader has a supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary. Mr. Speaker.

Could the Honourable Minister let us know whether any assessment was done on the equipment that was brought to Bermuda, the new equipment, prior to it landing in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Speaker: The answer is yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: Considering that then you found out that it is too heavy for our roads, can the Minister please elaborate on what kind of assessment was done?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. What we are referring to is less about the machinery in and of itself. What we are speaking to is the fragility of the retaining walls. That is what the question is. Recognising that a further assessment was done and it was deemed that the shuttle buggy was not best value for us to continue or for us to use it. That is all that happened.

So, the assessment on the machine and its impact was done. In fact, I will remind Honourable Members that the machines that we are referring to are currently being used now. So, I do not know where we are going, but that is fine.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Let's see where we are going. The assessment, did it have input from engineers?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

Did the engineers identify the risks that in fact occurred?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary and my final, [is] the Honourable Minister prepare to table the assessment?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: One moment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sure, sure gather.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, can I clarify? Can I ask the honourable Member for clarification? When he refers to an assessment, is he asking whether we assessed all retaining walls throughout the Island? Or is he asking for an assessment on the machines?

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Minister told this Honourable House that an assessment was carried out. He referred to it expressly. I am inviting him to confirm if he will table it.

Hon. Jache Adams: I was simply asking for clarity. But if he's asking for the machines, yes.

The Speaker: To save us from going back and forth, you are basically asking that . . . it was implied that an assessment was done. We all agree. And your question is, can that assessment that we just confirmed, that we all confirmed has been done, can that assessment be tabled?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Speaker: That is clarification. Best I can help you on clarifying, Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: I did answer the question, although I will say that there was not one single assessment on the shuttle buggy, but I agreed, yes.

The Speaker: MP King, you have a supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the shuttle buggy asphalt machine piece of machinery that we are all referring to, was a geological assessment done to determine whether or not the specified machinery to be used was too heavy or could potentially damage Bermuda's limestone structures and/or retaining walls and other structures given its weight and size?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, we did not do an assessment on all possible retaining walls throughout the Island that could potentially be damaged by this ongoing equipment. We brought it in. The machines that we brought in were assessed themselves and they are currently being used now.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary. The question I asked was with reference to retaining walls and other structures and also taking into consideration Bermuda's geological formation of limestone, which is soft, it is different from [Canadian] Shield and other rocks, it is very soft. So, understanding the weight and dimensions of the machinery I am asking was a geological and environmental assessment done to take those factors into consideration. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister, the Member is more specific in what he was seeking in his question.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, if the question is whether geological studies, clarifying geological studies were done throughout the entire Island, no.

The Speaker: You used you supplementaries there, two supplementaries. Good

Are there any further supplementaries off of this matter?

Yes, go ahead.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Were there any concerns raised before the machinery was brought to Bermuda, considering the Government would have been aware of the weight of the shuttle buggy and its potential impact? Had that concern been raised during the time of assessment by any engineers?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the concerns raised to the Ministry at that time were in reference to the size, not the weight. Not the weight.

What I can then go back to, if I can Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, is to say that many of the retaining walls that we were referring to were actually private retaining walls that did not, that were built many, many decades ago that were not built for this level of machinery, did not have the rebar and the building codes that were necessary. So those were part of the reasons why those private retaining walls would have . . . we have experienced issues with that.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

So, Members, that brings us to a close of the . . . oh, sorry, MP Linda Smith. You also had questions for that Statement.

MP Smith, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: ASPHALT PLANT REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND ROAD PAVING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister just said that the walls that were that were caving in were private walls, but if the walls that were caving in, caved in because of heavy equipment on them that belonged to the Government, who paid for those repairs?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: We did. The Government.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Linda Smith: Supplementary. And can the Minister give an indication of sort of the value of that, what it would it cost the taxpayer to fix those walls?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I do not know that offhand. I can endeavour to get that information to the Honourable Member.

The Speaker: The Minister says that is not what he has at hand, but he'll get the information for you.

Ms. Linda Smith: Okay, and I thank the Minister for that. I have a second question.

The Speaker: Second question?

QUESTION 2: ASPHALT PLANT REPLACEMENT PROJECT AND ROAD PAVING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes. The shuttle buggy, and I hate to go back to that, but it has another name, material transport equipment, and the Minister said the Minister said that the shuttle buggy will be returned to the manufacturer, and we will receive a debt credit of, I think you said, $700,000.

So, my question is the shuttle buggy, or the material transport equipment, must have some relevant job application that we are going to need. So, are we getting a new shuttle buggy or are we getting something else?

Hon. Jache Adams: It is not planned for anything to replace that. The existing machinery that we have is in use and we will continue to use those machines that we have. The shuttle buggy will be returned and there are no plans for any sort of replacement.

Ms. Linda Smith: So, if the shuttle buggy—

The Speaker: Supplementary? Supplementary.

Ms. Linda Smith: I am sorry.

The Speaker: No problem.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you. So, if the shuttle buggy isn't providing any extra service beyond which other equipment is providing, why did we have the shuttle buggy at all? What's the benefit of the shuttle buggy, if anything?

Hon. Jache Adams: It is an actual . . . there's a long answer and there's a short answer. But I will, for the reference of an oral question, the shuttle buggy was simply—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Every answer that I give is correct.

The Speaker: The Minister is going to give us a correct and the technical answer. I want to hear the technical answer. Talk to us, Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: So, the shuttle buggy was designed to be complementary to the other paving equipment that was purchased. It was designed to be used for specific conditions, roads and the like.

So, it is not a drawback, if you will, if we are not able to use it. We clearly have demonstrated that the existing machinery that we have is able to get the job done and we will continue using the existing machines that we have.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or third question?

Ms. Linda Smith: No more questions. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Members, that now brings us to a close of the Question Period this morning. We thank you for your participation and we will move on. The next item on the order paper this morning are Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches.

Would any Member like to participate in that? MP Ming, you have your three minutes.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and listening audience.

The Speaker: Good morning.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

Mrs. Renee Ming: My first note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the family of Mrs. Winifred Georges from constituency number 1 . . . she passed last week. I would like to associate MP Foggo with that and also MP Swan.

Mrs. Georges was, if you knew her, one of the St. George's gems. Extremely encouraging, always loving and always got a note of a kind word to give to anyone. You didn't even have to be just a St. Georgian, Mr. Speaker. And she will definitely be missed. She attended Richard Allen AME Church, which is my church, and we will definitely miss her sitting down in the back in her row, in her pew, and just shaking her head as the service went along. I would like her daughters, Sandy and Lily, to know that we are thinking about them at this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, we are in Blue Week. We had a blue wave across the United States. And although we are not directly impacted, I am sure there are some of us that are extremely happy for that.

It has also been a week of women, and I just want to, first of all, acknowledge here on the local side, Karen Sewell. And I am going to say her proper maiden name, Karen Hewey. She was elected on Tuesday evening as the very first woman Vice President at the Leopards Club International. And although the Leopards Club has been around for many years, we are going to associate the entire House with that. This is definitely a milestone. We are extremely happy for her. Her family dates back many, many years as members, supporters, workers, and volunteers at the Leopards Club. And so, this was a great milestone for the club and, in my view, for Bermuda because she has graciously stepped up. She accepts the responsibility and we are happy for her to do that. And she has our support.

So, on that note . . . Also, I just came in, actually, from East End Primary School. They reopened their school library today, associating MP Foggo and MP Swan, with that as well. Always an awesome time to be around our young people, especially as today we will discuss and debate their educational path as it moves forward. But I would like to just acknowledge the work of Ms. Ashby, Ms. Foggo. Also in attendance was Ms. Maxwell and Mrs. Clark from the National Youth Library. And it was good to see our children extremely excited to be opening up a library full of books and full of new entertaining things for them to get involved in. Also, the Minister of Finance would like to be involved in our St. George's School Library opening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Ming.

The Deputy Speaker was up before anyone else back there, so I acknowledge the Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the House, my colleagues. Good morning to the listening public.

Yes, I would like to be associated with remarks for Mrs. Georges. She was definitely a matriarch in St. George's, but her daughter, one of her daughters, is a constituent of mine. And so I think it would be remiss of me if I didn't verbally speak to condolences to the family as well.

But I would like to speak, and I do want to be, I was associated with the remarks for East End Primary, one of my alma maters. I would say, along with St. David's Primary, East End Primary is the best primary school in Bermuda. Anything East End is great, Mr. Speaker, you know that. So, I want to be associated with that. That was a big deal. I was invited to it, but as you all know, I had to be here to support you. Yes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to send condolences to the Fox family. St. David's recently lost one of their stalwarts, Mr. Terrence Graham, known as “Nicker Batman Fox.” For those of you avid cricketers, he was the father of Graham Fox, a St. George's Cup Match cricket player, as well as a St. George's player. Yes, he was. He is the father of Todd Fox, a principal at Francis

Patton Primary School. I would like to associate the Minister of Education. I would like to associate Member Swan and Member Ming and the Premier. I would like to associate that.

Nicker was a fun-loving guy. Any of his sons will tell you, he was a very strict person who believed in doing everything right. He was well known in the construction industry, and if Nicker put his hands on your building, you had a building that would serve you for the entirety of you being in that building. If it is 100 years, 100 years, because he insisted on excellence from beginning to the end.

He was also well known at the St. David's Cricket Club. A lot of people do not know that at one time he was the President of St. David's Cricket Club. He played football for St. David's. He was a goalkeeper. And his favourite sport was cricket. [It] is going to be a great loss to his family, but he did instil the values that they needed to have a successful life and to carry their game forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Premier, would you like your three minutes?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate the entire House with condolences that I would ask this Honourable House to please send.

Mr. Speaker, we were last here on October 2nd. And on October 3rd, the country awoke to a tragedy. And I would like to ask this Honourable House to please send a letter of condolence to the family of the late Marilyn Lavonne Bean, and the late Sergio Wayne Lottimore, and also to the Latitude Air Ambulance Company on the loss of their crew.

Mr. Speaker, the country, as we all know, was greatly impacted by this particular tragedy. The community of Somerset, of which you have represented for many, many years, was certainly impacted as well. So, whether it is Sergio's father, as the rest of us know, Wayne Lottimore, whether it is Ms. Lavonne Bean's surviving children and Sergio's siblings, Lorenzo Lottimore, DeLeon Grant, and Michaela Outterbridge, I just want to make sure that this Honourable House sends a letter to know that our thoughts and prayers continue to be with them. And the reminder that there [was] a memorial service Sunday, November 1st, at 1:00 pm at the Cathedral of Most Holy Trinity.

Without question, Mr. Speaker, it did affect us all, and it is important that we continue to pray for the family, support the family, as I know Honourable Members of this House have done so, and continue to reach out. But I want to make sure that a letter is sent for this Honourable House to that family, please, Mr. Speaker, for in their time of mourning. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Does any other Member wish?

MP DeCouto, you have your three minutes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would like to congratulate the young golfer, Kenny Lesseur. He's just now won the Moongate Tour for the second time in a row. I want to associate MP Swan and others in the room. And I know he'll have many more successes to come, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to congratulate the Bermuda Sea Cadets on their, just celebrated their 60th anniversary, and so thank you to Lieutenant Commander Michael Frith and his team and everyone involved in that. I am not personally involved with it, but I know that those involved, they get a lot out of it, and I am a fan of anything nautical. For those who are listening, they are also doing a capital campaign, so reach out and open up your wallet.

I am sure they appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to provide condolences on the passing of Mr. Kenneth “KC” Daniels of Boundary Crescent, Devonshire.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Sundown, also known as “Sundown,” that is correct. And associate MP Tucker. I know that his funeral is, in fact, ongoing.

The Speaker: Right now.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Right now.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Those who knew him, many knew him as a well-respected, very successful entrepreneur, devoted to his community, to his Island, to our Island. I personally have met him only a few times, but definitely describe him as larger than life, and he could certainly hold your attention, Mr. Speaker. His passing is a loss to the Island and all of us, so I extend my condolences to his children, Rhonda, Roxann, Kyle, his grandchildren, and the entire family.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Is there any other one? Any other Member?

MP Tucker? Yes.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend condolences to former Senator Walwyn Hughes on the passing of his wife, Catherine. They are constituents I am going to associate in the Premier—

The Speaker: And the whole House.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Sorry, and the whole House, with those condolences. As well as I would like to extend condolences to Minister Rabain and his family on the passing of his grandmother. Yes, correct? Okay, so I herein associate the House, and I am doing that.

And then I would like to extend condolences to my family on the passing of my son-in-law's . . . sorry, my son's mother-in-law, Cheryl Godfrey. And I would like to extend condolences to her daughter, Chernika, her sons, Shane and Stephen, and as well as her sister, Lori, and her husband, Alan, and the 16 grandchildren of which my grandchildren are included in that as well. We laid her to rest last weekend.

To end on a positive note, I would like to extend congratulations to all of the Bermuda College scholarship recipients. And what was particularly notable to me there was there were a few mature students of which I was one, and a recipient of the Mature Students Award when I went to Bermuda College. And I certainly understand the sacrifices of being a mature student, of home balance in work and school, and home and children and the like. It is not for the faint of heart.

And I would also like to express congratulations to the winners of the Teacher Education Awards scholarships, which obviously that is a profession that is not only well needed, but is extremely important to our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Lister, would you like to take your three minutes at this time?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do have a list, so please bear with me if I do speed through.

The Speaker: You have three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: But I hope not to overlook anybody. Mr. Speaker, I would first like to send condolences to the families, firstly, of Mr. Gary Fray, a constituent of mine, associate MP Tyrrell and MP Swan. Very long-time constituent of my branch. He was a member of Warwick Workman's and, Mr. Speaker, I was actually surprised by this. It wasn't until I opened *The Royal Gazette* today that I actually saw that he passed. But at the beginning of October when I held my monthly clinic, as usual, he rides by, stops, and we had a good conversation and it is very surprising and shocking to hear that he had passed in that time. But as I said, I do want to send condolences to his wife and to his family.

Also, Mr. Speaker, to a former neighbour of ours, Mr. Lynn “Snake” Wade. He had his funeral this week. I want to associate Minister Adams and MP Swan and the Premier. As I said, he was one of our first neighbours living down on Hog Bay Level stretch and it is again said, and to his family, his siblings, and his relatives, send condolences to them on the passing of Mr. Snake.

Also, to a young man, Mr. N’Zhari, also known as “Sali” Phillips. He passed a few years ago at the bike accident at Somerset Bridge. I knew him. He was a friend of mine. And again, a young person. And it is sad to hear when we lose young people on our roads. He was a young father. And so, to his family, I would like to send condolences to them.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, my own family. My uncle Harold passed a couple weeks ago, since we last sat in his House, and so to the Showers and Smith families, I would like to send condolences on the passing of Uncle Harold.

Mr. Speaker, in lighter news, again, I would like to recognise Bermudians that do well in sports overseas. Ms. Nia Christopher, who finished in the Icelandic Women's League as the top scorer, 17 goals.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So, representing and showing Bermuda well, even in the cold places, Iceland.

Ms. Madelyn Moore recently competed in the World Police Games in the Dominican Republic, where she won five golds and one silver. She bested police officers from 30 other countries, so Bermuda is top in that aspect.

Also highlighting Ms. Rachael Betschart, who finished first at the WASZP EuroCup Regatta in France. So, this is sailing. Associate the House. She finished first amongst boys also, so that did not hold her back competing against boys.

And lastly, another constituent of mine. Mr. Tariq Simons on becoming a professional tennis player for Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Darrell, would you like to have your three minutes?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate a few Bermudians in the realm of sports today. So, I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, with a group of young men, the Under-15 World Cup and Festival team. They went over to Azerbaijan, and they participated in a new tournament that was out there. I think it was like eight a side, and they did quite well. I did see the listings that came, and I was shocked and surprised by some of the nations that they actually did finish ahead of. So, I want to congratulate them, the head coach, all of the parents associated with the Premier—

The Speaker: The House, you can do the House. Do the House, the House.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and the entire House with that, and that group of young men that travelled so far and

did so well. And I was unable unfortunately to greet them when they returned at the airport, but I did make a note that I will congratulate them in this place.

Also, following on to the congrats that were given by my colleague, I would like to also officially from the Department of Sports and all of Bermuda, associate the entire House with congrats to Mr. Tariq Simons. As the Honourable Member just said, he won his landmark first professional victory at the Bermuda Tennis Open, which was hosted and held at the WER Joell Tennis [Stadium].

I would like to thank and put on record the Ministry of Public Works for assisting us in getting that facility ready for not only this tournament, but the tournament that we had, the Davis Cup, previous to that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago now I had the opportunity in my capacity as Minister Responsible for Sport to attend the annual prize-giving ceremony for the Bermuda Cricket Board. And as my Honourable Colleague did mention, the Cricket Board did honour the late Winston Reid as well as Gary Fray at those awards. Southampton Rangers in the 50 overs cleaned up, I would say most of the awards. I know everyone could look and see the individual awards.

Cleveland County, I would say that, cleaned up in the first division awards. And I would just like to point out, and I am sure he'll have a word for me after this, but the individual who won MVP for the Premier League, Mr. Allan Douglas Jr., though he did grow up in St. David's, it is nothing but Cleveland County blue and white in his blood. So, I would like to congratulate him for MVP, as well as Courtney Trott, the coach, and everyone else who won awards, associate the area MP for Cleveland County, yes.

And I would like to congratulate everyone else that won awards at the Bermuda Cricket Board's awards ceremony.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Tyrrell, would you like to take your three minutes at this time?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good day to my colleagues and the listening audience. I associated myself with two of the young people that I was about to send congratulations to, but I haven't associated. I will say that Tariq Simons, a good professional now, tennis player who actually coached my grandson for the last two summers, so I am hoping that my grandson can take some pride in that his coach is now a professional and can probably give him some more tips.

The other person that I associated myself with was Rachael Betschart, because her family lives in my, some of her family lives in my constituency, and she's a very multi-talented individual, and also at this time is actually looking towards her pursuing a mechanical engineering degree in Exeter University, so we do have some multi-talented people in Bermuda.

I also want to mention a young man who has recently left the police service after a long service there, left as an inspector, Inspector Kenton Trott. I do associate the independent Member, in fact the whole house. Kenton and I, we have a family connection in terms of, we have some family connection, and one of the things I noted about Kenton is that he has an interest in the youth, and that was something that he prided himself highly as a police, in the police service, and I hope that where he's going on to, I hope he can continue that aspiration in terms of developing our young people.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, and I said I associated myself with Gary Fray. The speaker who spoke about him did say that he was one of his constituents. But let me give you something. I have a monthly clinic, every Saturday, first Saturday of every month, and Gary Fray came every time to give me support, because we have known each other for years. He was the president of Warwick Workman's Club, of which I am a member, and a gentleman, really a gentleman. So I certainly had to speak to that, and I send condolences to his family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: And Minister Furbert, would you like your three minutes?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to give some congratulatory remarks really briefly. I did have the opportunity to attend The Berkeley Institute Founder's Day, as well as their honours and awards. I would like to associate the Minister of Education, I believe Minister . . . sorry, MP Curtis Dickinson was in attendance as well. I just wanted to, you know, recognise the students in their achievements, with honouring the hard work that they've put in to achieve their honours and awards. And as well as The Berkeley for holding down the mantle and making sure that their students and the community is aware of their legacy and their history, so that they never forget what makes up part of their identity.

So, a big congratulations to the team, as well as the guest speakers of the day, which were Ms. Suzanne Williams and Juanita Burke.

I also want to send congratulations to the Bermuda Treasures Tennis Seniors Programme, which is held under the direction of the Lambert family. And they do a fantastic job of supporting our seniors in healthy and physical and mental activity. And it is, you know, a lot of work that goes into that particular programme, and they have such a huge following of seniors who participate in that programme. So, I just want to congratulate that team for making that programme available for our seniors.

Also, I attended an event called Finding Your Village. It was an event put on by the Carter Centre, which is a charity off of the K. Margaret Carter Centre.

And they had an event where they brought together all of the stakeholders in our community that provide supports for persons with disabilities in Bermuda. So, I do want to congratulate them for the development of that event and actually following through with it to provide an educational and informational opportunity and forum for persons with disabilities in Bermuda.

And lastly, I would just like to acknowledge MP Neville Tyrrell's daughter, Ms. Kisha Tyrrell, on her promotion to vice boss, associate the whole House, on her promotion as being head of Captive and Insurance Management Solutions business in Bermuda. We must continue to recognise our leaders who are doing amazing things and just a big congratulations to Ms. Kisha Tyrrell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am sorry. It looks like there are other Members who still want to raise, to give remarks, but it is that time, so let us break now and they can come back do the last few and then we will go to lunch.

Hon. E. David Burt: You want to move it or no?

The Speaker: Yeah, yeah, yeah, move it.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move this Honourable House to now adjourn for lunch to return at 2:00 pm.

Any objections?

The Speaker: There are none. We now stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. And we will finish with the rest of the congratulations and then move on from there. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended at 12:33 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

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

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: Members, we are resuming with Congratulatory and/or Obituary [Speeches].

Are there any Members who wish to speak? I recognise the Member from constituency 2.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with a profound sadness that I rise to offer condolences to the family of Ms. Jean Wilson, Nurse Jean Wilson from Ferry Reach, St. George's. I was saddened to hear of her passing, and I was reminded that at the last election she was mistakenly removed from the electoral roll because there was a Jean Simons who died in late 2024.

As is in Bermuda, many of us share names and sometimes those mistakes do occur. And it is not a nice feeling when your name is not there. But she was still here with us at that time, and I am sad that she has passed on. She was an extraordinary nurse practitioner, and I will be writing a tribute in honour of her legacy in that department as well as her community spirit in that Pendle Lane community. My good friend, Canard Pascoe, and I had a chat about the community that she [was] a part of there. And I know her and her neighbours especially and her family and friends are saddened by her passing as I [am].

I would like to be associated with the condolences offered to the family of Catherine Hughes. Dr. [Idwal] Hughes and I served alongside each other in the Senate for nine years. I certainly got to know a great deal about him and his family and his loving wife. And I know he mourns deeply as indeed her whole family.

Mr. Gary Fray, we were just talking about what year he played in Cup Match the week before he passed. He played for Somerset and it was told by me as the first Warwick guy to go into Cup Match because Lloyd James went into Cup Match playing for Southampton Rangers at that time.

[Condolences to the family of] KC Daniels, the family of KC Daniels who I've known all my life. My cousin, Marsha, is married to Kyle and "Snake" Wade who I grew up with him in White Hill.

And to be associated with the congratulatory remarks offered to Kenten Trott.

I'd like to mention Lewis MacFarlane and Darina Betschart for their outstanding golf achievements this summer and just representing Bermuda admirably in the junior [2026] Optimist [Tournament of Champions].

And also, finally, I would like to acknowledge Mr. [David] Horan from Warwick Academy. I see how Warwick Academy pride themselves on being the closest thing to a sports academy in Bermuda. And Warwick has golfers and I love to see them out there with their golf bags playing Belmont. My brother, Darron, allows them to . . . any junior to play for free. And Warwick is doing a good job in that department.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Opposition Leader.

Member, you have the floor.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to be associated with the comments made by the Premier earlier regarding the lives that were lost in that air ambulance crash. I agree with the sentiment of the Premier that this is a tragedy that has touched the entire country. Our thoughts are with the family members in Bermuda, but also the family members of the crew. This was a significant tragedy that I think touched in a different way. Full condolences to everybody there and I agree that an official letter should be sent.

On another note of condolences, I would like to give condolences to the family of Pamela Carlington. Pamela Carlington was somebody who I actually met quite some time ago when she was working in the Department of Education. She was there for a long time and when I first met her, I will tell you that anybody that interacted with her would know that she was saucy. She let you know what she was thinking.

Later on, as a constituent in [constituency] 8, I got to know her further. We spent lots of hours talking about education. What I will tell you is that the last opportunity that I had to talk to Pam was just a few weeks ago and we were discussing the changes that are upcoming in education, and she always was in tune to what was happening. [She] was always spending time talking to teachers and principals and keeping herself connected.

At the time she was actually in the hallway in our hospital talking to me on her cell phone. And instead of it being about what she was going through, it was: *Let's talk about education. Let's talk about how we [can] do things better for our children.* And to be able to give these condolences, I wish instead she was able to listen to the debate that we will have later on today because I know that she would have been listening with keen interest. So, to her daughters, Sharon and Karen, sincere condolences to both of you. I was able to attend the funeral on Sunday, and it was a good send-off for her.

The Cathedral was full because she also was a significant member of The Cathedral including in the choir and the BPSU [Bermuda Public Services Union] came out in full strength to support her because after she retired, she actually was the secretary . . . helping . . . because with Pam it was always helping, always looking for how she could help others. She will be missed by her family, and she will be missed by me.

Thank you.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Just in the nick of time.

Is there anyone else who wishes to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 13.

Member, you have the floor . . . Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to be associated with the comments for Kenten Trott. As was spoken, he has always given himself especially to youth and those who know him very well would know that that is something he enjoys doing. I am actually proud of him. He's one of . . . we have brought back the CyberTips programme and he's actually one of the instructors that has come onboard. And I had an opportunity to watch him at Paget Primary just last week giving one of his lectures.

I would also like to be associated with the comments on Pam Carlington. I do remember her from the Department of Education and so condolences to her family.

Also, I would like to send condolences to the family of our colleague, Michael Weeks, on the loss of his sister, Sherrell Mundy, who was a participant at St. Philip [AME] Church.

Once again, condolences to the family of Fred “Pinks” Lewis, who has tragically lost his life. I have known his son, Troy, literally for the last 35 years. We started a company together back in the early 1990s and we still remain very good friends today. So, definitely condolences [regarding] Fred [to] his family.

Once again, thank you, MP Robin [Tucker], who mentioned condolences to my family for the loss of our grandmother. I now enter into that stage of life where I do not have any grandparents left and we will celebrate her life next Saturday on the 14th. I am looking forward to getting together with all my cousins and aunts and the rest of the Rabain side, and so we can do it like only they know how to do it.

Congratulations. I would like to send congratulations . . . and I will associate MP Tucker. I am sure she just forgot this one. Congratulations to St. Philip AME who celebrated 100 years on October 18th. Yes. You were there and we went on the tour afterwards. And, you know, it's always . . . for those who have never gone and toured Tucker’s Town, and actually, the only remaining part of St. Philip's Church is a broken-down set of stairs. And so, people . . . it was exciting to see people get out of the bus and take pictures next to the stairs and such. And so, if you ever get a chance to go down there, I highly recommend it. It seems like those stairs will be there forever because there's no real reason to destroy them or anything, but it is a set of overgrown stairs with grass and stuff. But you can actually see them right on the roadside leading up to wherever the church was up on that hill.

Lastly, congratulations to The Berkeley Institute. I attended their Career Fair yesterday. Wonderful event. Lots of . . . and thank you to all of the companies that came out to be able to give our young people an opportunity to discuss future careers.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 33.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Good afternoon and thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to join with, in reality the nation, and be associated with the remarks made to the passing of sister Lavonne Bean and Sergio Lottimore. Ms. Bean was a constituent, and Mr. Lottimore . . . I can say that my wife and I knew him before he was born because we worked very closely with his father, Wayne L., in our radio days. And we join with the community; we join with the Island in sending our condolences and our love and we will be joining them on Sunday for the funeral.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am also . . . for another sad note . . . I am on my feet to mourn the passing of a very close friend and constituent, Mr. Lynn "Speed" a.k.a. "Snake" Wade.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: My boy.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I will tell you, the Hog Bay level will not be the same without him—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: —and I will tell you a story.

The last election . . . the first election when I first got elected on a bye-election, you know, we would go through the count. And you know you are victorious. You are waiting to come out. And I expect the first person [I] see to be my wife, to be my mother, my father, my children. But the first person to vote and the first person at the door was "Speed." He got ahead of everybody to greet me at the door.

So, I joked with him. I said, *You know, Speed, God spares life. When my time comes and I go up to the heavenly gates, I'm expecting to be greeted by all sorts of people. I know who will be at the front of the line saying: You're just getting here, bye?*

[Laughter]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I give thanks to him and his family and to all the constituents who rallied around the family to support them in this time of bereavement.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: On a bit of a higher note, I just wanted to congratulate . . . and I have gotten up several times to speak to a club by the name of Dandy Town. I would like to congratulate them, still on their programme. I keep speaking about the wonderful things that they are doing alongside some of the other clubs as well.

But I had the opportunity to see them on video . . . [when] the Under 13s travelled abroad to go to high schools to find out if there's any interest in young Bermudian soccer football players. So, I can't commend them enough for exposing these young men and women to the opportunities that exist out there. I will declare my interest. They did go to Northfield Mount Hermon. That is a school that my grandson, 16-year-old, attends and he is a Dandy Town player and still is.

What I will say (and congratulations to the club) is that they are producing fine young men and women. Marcus Spencer, who is my grandson, he plays for the varsity team [at] Northfield Mount Hermon. We had a chance to visit him two weeks ago. And while there *Sports Illustrated* nominated his school, his varsity soccer team (which he plays on), as the number one football team in the country. So, kudos to Dandy Town for the work that they are doing and kudos to the other clubs as well that are producing some fine young men and women players in the arena of football. A lot is happening with our young people. And I am glad to see that they have this opportunity afforded to them.

Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

No other Members?

Okay. That moves us to the next part of our agenda which is . . . just one second.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Deputy Speaker: There [are] none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

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: We have several Bills that are . . . sorry, one Bill that we have . . . one Bill that is listed under Government Bills.

I call on the Premier and Minister of Finance.

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

BILL

FIRST READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION (NO. 2) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day meeting: the Public Service Superannuation (No. 2) Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker: I do understand that we have one matter that we are going to be debating today. And I call on the relevant Minister, the Minister of Education, to lead.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Education Authority Act 2026 now be read the second time.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Education Authority Act 2026 be read a second time.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

Minister, I thought you were getting up to object.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

BILL

SECOND READING

EDUCATION AUTHORITY ACT 2026

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Speaker . . . Madam Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker. For nearly two decades this Chamber, successive Governments and our wider community have talked, debated, and consulted on how to fix what is broken in our education system. For 20 years the conversation has too often been dominated by adult politics, adult anxieties and political soundbites. But today we draw a line in the sand.

There is a profound truth in educational leadership that must guide our debate today: When we make decisions based on what is best for children, we rarely make a mistake. When we make decisions based on what is best for adults, we rarely serve children. [Madam] Deputy Speaker, this Government did not bring the Education Authority Bill to this House to score political points or to capture a headline. We brought it here because we have fought long and hard to finally remove politics from our classrooms. Our children do not need our rhetoric. They need our resolve. They do not live in political cycles. They live in the reality of the preparation we fail or succeed to give them.

When I tabled this legislation, I described that moment as a milestone almost two decades in the making. Today this Honourable House moves from tabling to debate. And as we begin that debate, I want to start where every discussion about education should start: with our children.

Madam Deputy Speaker when we speak about an Education Authority it is easy for the discussion to become consumed by structures, boards, appointments, Ministers, committees, powers and legislation. Those matters deserve scrutiny, but they are not the reason we are here. We are here because every child who enters Bermuda's public education system deserves a system that is well governed, professionally led, accountable for its performance and relentlessly focused on improving outcomes. Governance reform is the means. Better outcomes for our children is the end. An Education Authority does not by itself improve literacy, strengthen teaching or improve student well-being.

Those improvements come through educators, school leaders, families and communities. Governance supplies the accountability, continuity and institutional framework within which that work can be sustained.

[Madam] Deputy Speaker, this Bill did not suddenly arrive before Parliament. The road here stretches back nearly two decades. The Hopkins Report of 2007 identified systematic challenges in public education. BermudaFirst later explicitly recommended an authority for public education. Learning First gave reform proposals structured through consultation, and the Education Authority Working Group formed in 2021 translated the policy commitments into operational work around legislation, governance, funding, accountability and transition planning. This is not a policy conceived yesterday, nor a reaction to the politics of today. It is a culmination of years of review, consultation, policy development and legislative work.

The political mandate is also clear. The 2020 Progressive Labour Party platform committed to school boards under the Authority and a two-tier system with signature schools. The 2025 platform recommitted to completing the Authority, and the March 2025 Throne Speech committed Government to bringing the Bill before this Legislature in this session. We said we would do it, and the Bill is now before the House. That is a legitimate political achievement. But passage cannot itself be the measure of success. The ultimate measure must be what changes for the child sitting in a Bermuda classroom.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Governments change, Ministers change, priorities change. Transforming an education system takes longer than an electoral cycle. The fundamental governance question is how to create a system capable of pursuing improvement consistently even when the political people [are] responsible for a change. That is the problem the Education Authority addresses. It creates an institution whose remit is education with professional governance capable of sustaining reform beyond one Minister, one Cabinet, and one political cycle. As I stated, Governments will change and Ministers will change. However, our children's education cannot be continued to be asked to start again every time they do.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one principal question is how independent the Authority can be if the Minister retains statutory responsibilities. Autonomy does not require the disappearance of Government, Parliament, or public accountability. The Authority remains publicly funded. Government remains democratically accountable for policy and public expenditure. Parliament retains oversight. What changes is where the professional and operational responsibilities increasingly sit. Autonomy does not mean the absence of Government. It means clarity about where Government's role ends and the Authority's role begins.

Madam Deputy Speaker, independence must have a practical meaning. It cannot mean that an organisation receiving public money is beyond Parliament, beyond financial accountability, or beyond the laws of Bermuda. The real test is whether Ministers run the day-to-day education system. Under this legislation, they will not. The board governs the Authority. The Authority develops the professional and operational model. Government retains legitimate responsibility for public policy and public money, and Parliament retains its legislative role. That is operational independence with democratic accountability. The two are not contradictory.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda already understands this distinction. Consider the Bermuda Monetary Authority [BMA]. The BMA model combines meaningful ministerial statutory responsibility with board responsibility for the institution's affairs, business, policy objectives, and strategy. The Minister appoints the board members and the chairman, who may issue general directions in the public interest after consultation, approves the expenditure budget, and may make regulations after consulting the Authority. Few would conclude that the Minister therefore personally makes the BMA's daily regulatory decisions.

The existence of statutory ministerial responsibilities does not establish operational control. Ministerial accountability and operational independence can and do exist together. The Education Authority is not the BMA; but the governing principle is familiar. The proper test is not whether a Minister appears in the Act. It is who governs the institution, who manages its affairs, and where operational decisions sit. Under this Bill, the board governs the Authority. The Minister may issue directions of a general character following consultation. The board may seek ministerial advice but may act differently from that advice.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the BMA is not the only example. Across Bermuda's statutory authorities, we repeatedly find arm's-length public bodies with boards responsible for their affairs, alongside defined ministerial responsibilities, financial oversight, reporting duties, and confidentiality provisions. These are not unique features invented for the Education Authority. They are recognisable features in Bermuda's statutory authority legislation.

Education differs from financial regulation, airport operations, and tourism. This Bill must therefore be judged according to the needs of education, but Bermuda's own statute book gives us the proper baseline for assessing whether particular features are inherently incompatible with an arm's-length authority.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the BMA framework combines board management of the Authority with ministerial power following consultation to issue written general directions in the public interest. The Airport Authority legislation goes further by permitting written, general, and specific directions concerning finances and policy after consultation and consideration of the board's representations, while responsibility for the Authority's actions and general administration rests with its board. If any ministerial direction power

automatically destroys autonomy, the criticism is no longer merely of this Bill. It is an argument against an established form of public governance in Bermuda law.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the same comparison applies to appointments. BMA board members and chairman are ministerially appointed while the board manages the Authority's affairs and strategy. The Airport and Tourism Authority statutes also contain ministerial roles in board and leadership appointments.

The Education Authority adds a specific merit architecture for its initial board. The Board of Education develops the criteria, vacancies are advertised, applicants are assessed and vetted, and the Minister appoints from that qualified pool. The intention previously explained to Members opposite is to separate application and vetting from the office of the Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the permanent governance architecture and the mechanisms needed to establish the new institution are not necessarily identical. The first chairman and the first CEO are transitional arrangements. They should not be confused with the enduring model under which the board appoints its chairman or the structured search and selection committee process supporting appointment of the CEO. The proper question is not merely who performs the first appointment. It is what governance arrangements endure after the institution is established.

[Madam Deputy] Speaker, statutory removal mechanisms also appear incomparable to Authority legislation. The BMA and Airport Authority statutes contain defined grounds and processes for removal. The Education Authority provision should therefore be assessed by its actual safeguards, consultation, written notice, an opportunity to make representations, and specific statutory grounds. It should not be described as an unrestricted power to dismiss a member simply because that member disagrees with the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Airport Authority submits annual income and expenditure estimates for approval and receives grants appropriated by the legislature. The BMA likewise submits annual expenditure estimates for approval. Operational independence does not mean financial sovereignty over money appropriated by Parliament. Public funding brings legitimate democratic and financial accountability. It does not by itself convert a professional board into a department managed from a Minister's office. And [Madam] Deputy Speaker, there has been dramatic commentary about section 35 and the fact that unauthorised disclosure may constitute a criminal offence.

Such provisions were not invented for the Education Authority. Section 31 of the BMA Act is entitled “Secrecy” and imposes duties, statutory exceptions, and criminal penalties. Section 17 of the Airport Authority Act is entitled “Confidentiality,” and it also protects information through an offence with lawful exceptions.

An arm's-length authority does not cease to handle confidential information merely because it is operationally independent. A proper debate on whether legitimate disclosures remain protected and how provisions interact with wider law. The Government's parliamentary briefing to MPs and Senators noted that section 35 does not override whistle-blower protections under section 29A of the Employment Act 2000. Confidentiality backed by an offence is demonstratively not unique to this Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, comparable authorities commonly provide annual reports and audited accounts to the responsible Minister who then lays them before the legislature. Ministerial receipt and parliamentary accountability are parts of the same statutory chain.

The Education Authority should not copy other authorities’ provisions for provision. The comparisons I spoke to establish a narrow but important point. Bermuda law repeatedly combines ministerial appointments, directions, public funding, budget oversight, removal provisions, reporting, commencement powers, and confidentiality duties with substantial board responsibilities for institutional affairs.

There's a difference between saying: *I prefer a different statutory model,* and saying: *This cannot be autonomous because the Minister retains statutory responsibility.* The first is a legitimate policy argument. The second is contradicted by Bermuda's own legislative experiences.

Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, the Minister performs formal appointment functions, but there is a material difference between making an appointment and handpicking a board. The initial selection process covers published criteria, qualifications, competencies, scoring, applications, interviews, and vetting. Vacancies are advertised. The Minister may propose changes to criteria, but the Board of Education is not required to accept it. Legislatures are excluded from serving. Expertise is built into the board. If the objective were political control, excluding politicians from the governing board would be a peculiar way to design it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have maintained in this House and in public that this Bill is about our children. And I am open to anyone who wishes to express their concerns and thoughts on the Bill before us today. I have held multiple briefings with Members of the legislature, the Opposition, the media, educators, the Board of Education, and aided school boards. I have been very open in those briefings about how critical it is for us to have an understanding of what this Bill does and what it doesn't do, and any suggestion or observations would be considered.

Some Members will understand my surprise when the Opposition chose to announce proposed amendments via *The Royal Gazette*. The irony is that after that publication, I held a further briefing session attended by Members opposite from both this House and [the] other place, at which not a single word was said about those publicly declared amendments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Members opposite clearly have a different view of what independence

should mean in this legislation. That is a legitimate matter for parliamentary debate. But we must test that argument against the legislation actually before us, rather than against a label or an assumed model of what an Authority ought to be. There is a difference between an amendment that cures a defect and one which misunderstands a deliberate feature of the model.

We cannot call for autonomy for years and then micromanage it by amendment when it finally arrives. However, based on the input received from the various briefings and comments made indirectly via the media, I wish to speak to some of the issues that I feel have been misinterpreted, and hopefully add clarity that may not have been available to those reading or perhaps only listening to others' commentary on this Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I address these specific concerns, I must correct a fundamental understanding of what has repeatedly appeared in public commentary, including letters and opinion pieces in the local paper over the last few weeks.

This Bill does not establish an Advisory Board. It establishes an Education Authority as a body corporate, a legal institution with perpetual succession, a common seal, and the power to sue and be sued in its own name. It is a public body corporate. It will be a body that does the heavy lifting of consulting, design, and recommendation on how Bermuda's education system will ultimately work. That is why questions about whether school boards should have a particular number of parents or educators, how school-level governance should be constituted, or how parental voice should be structured at the school level are not questions this Bill answers. Those are Phase 2 matters.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they will be developed by the Authority. They will be consulted on with the stakeholders (who should rightly be consulted), parents, educators, trade unions, aided schools, and the wider community, and they will be returned to this Honourable House in later legislation for Members here to debate and decide. To debate those details now would be to pre-empt the very consultation this legislation is designed to enable, and to vote this Bill down on the basis that it does not resolve Phase 2 questions would be to reject the very vehicle that is designed to answer them properly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not an omission. It is a deliberate sequencing of reform. Where further operational structures, standards, procedures, or statutory powers are required, the Authority must first do the work, examine the evidence, consult the people affected, develop the model, and make its recommendations. Where legislation is then required, Parliament will decide. We should be careful not to confuse something deliberately assigned to Phase 2 with something Government has forgotten to address.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this distinction matters. An Education Authority that is a body corporate is substantively different from an advisory committee. It has legal personality. It can hold property. It can enter contracts. It can employ staff. It can consult, decide, and recommend. This is the institutional foundation on which every subsequent stage of reform rests.

Madam Deputy Speaker, attention has been drawn to provisions under which, in specified transition matters, the board must act in accordance with the advice of the Transition Advisory Committee. Where the legislation says, *shall act in accordance with*, that is stronger than merely requiring the board to receive and consider advice. The phrase is binding where it applies.

The more important question is, binding advice about what? The Transition [Advisory] Committee does not determine curriculum, standards, long-term education strategy, or the day-to-day operations of schools. Its purpose concerns the mechanics of moving responsibilities from one government structure to another. That work necessarily engages public offices and officers, staff arrangements, assets and liabilities, contracts and records, statutory responsibilities, and continuity of service.

An independent Authority can determine what the future system requires, but it cannot abolish public offices by decree or transfer Government obligations through the existing legal framework . . . doesn't exist. Those responsibilities must be transitioned lawfully, responsibly, and with continuity of service protected.

The Authority Board develops recommendations on future maintained school governance, including composition, qualifications, powers, and operating arrangements. Stakeholder consultation is required. The school boards themselves are then established through later legislation. The Transition Advisory Committee does not enact those powers, establish final boards, or bypass Parliament. Its binding role is confined to specified transition matters. The board develops education government recommendations. The transition machinery addresses government transition implications. The Minister brings legislation and Parliament decides what becomes law.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Transitional [Advisory] Committee does not become the governing board, assume every board function, control the CEO, or assume ongoing responsibility for the Authority's affairs. It has a defined, and in specified areas binding, role in transition only. It does not have general control of the Authority or determine Bermuda's enduring public policy.

During Phase 1, the existing education framework continues while the Authority is established. Where an Authority function may affect a statutory function of the Commissioner, consultation is required. Consultation . . . is not approval and access to expertise does not require permanent government membership. The Commissioner can therefore be heard whenever responsibilities intersect without becoming a permanent member of every body established under this Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, after tabling, I was asked whether the Act should specifically require the

Authority to work with Corrections on programmes. This may be a sensible partnership, but Parliament should be cautious about writing every sensible future relationship into the Act. If working with Corrections, Health, Bermuda College, Workforce Development, employers, or community organisations advances the Authority's statutory purpose, its professional board should have the room to make that judgment. The legislation should create the architecture for good decisions. It should not make every future decision before the Authority has begun its work.

There's also a contradiction in demanding greater independence for the Authority while simultaneously asking Parliament to prescribe more and more of the decisions the Authority itself must make. Independence cannot simply mean independence from Minister while remaining dependent on Parliament to design every operational detail.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the existence of accountability mechanisms on paper is not proof of effective accountability. Accountability requires clarity, measurement, reporting, and identifiable responsibilities. The framework requires the Authority itself to establish its strategic priorities, major activities, and quantitative measures of performance through its operational plan and then account for its performance through quarterly reports addressing student outcomes, financial performance, and system-wide governance.

Annual reports and audited accounts ultimately come before legislature. That is deliberate. Parliament establishes the outcomes and accountability framework. The professional Authority determines how best to operate within it. Accountability is not an argument against this Bill. Stronger accountability is one of the central reasons for it.

When educators say teachers must be at the centre of reform, I wholeheartedly agree. Educators are not simply the people who implement reform. They must have a meaningful voice in shaping the system in which government's children learn. The Authority is not an indictment of teachers. Greater distance from daily political management should create more room for professional judgment, not less.

Madam Deputy Speaker, because this is an operating education system, children will still attend school. Teachers will still teach, principals lead, support services function, and buildings operate while reform proceeds.

We must build the new properly before dismantling the old. During Phase 1, the board develops recommendations for system-wide reform, maintain school governance, aided school collaboration, and transition from the department, including functions, staff, assets, liabilities, contracts, records, and continuity of service. The board has 18 months to submit recommendations. The next substantive stage then returns to Parliament for further legislation, with a statutory obligation to explain delays and continue reporting until that legislation is laid.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the initial establishment does not itself transfer employees out of the public service, change terms or conditions, change collective bargaining agreement arrangements, abolish the Department of Education, establish future school boards, or alter aided schools from their existing footing. Future substantive transition requires further legislation and consultation.

The Bill establishes the Authority and professional governance. It fixes the future direction of maintained school governance while detailed composition, powers, and operating arrangements are developed through Phase 1 and subsequent legislation. It also places responsibility for maintaining school facilities and grounds subject to service-level agreements within the Authority framework. It addresses school-based health services connected to educational needs. A child’s needs do not organise themselves according to the boundaries of a government organisational chart.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while I have gone to great lengths to clarify what I consider misinterpretations, the briefing has also led us to look at whether anything could be clearer in the legislation itself. You must distinguish genuine gaps from criticism that read one provision while omitting another or treat a transitional exception as the permanent model. As a result, we will bring forward some amendments to be discussed during the clause-by-clause debate, and I am hopeful these amendments will also address some of the questions raised during the various briefings.

The following are areas that have raised the most concerns during our briefings:

1. First chairman and CEO. The first appointments are transitional exceptions. The enduring model places the chairman and the CEO within board-led arrangements. Amendments proposed will clarify and strengthen this initial appointment process.
2. Transitional Advisory Committee. Making the committee entirely nonbinding would remove transitional coordination precisely where government offices, officers, assets, liability, and obligations are engaged. The committee's defined binding role does not give it general authority over the education policy.
3. Publication and transparency. The Bill contains extensive reporting requirements, and the proposed amendment strengthens transparency further by placing publication with the Authority itself and expressly empowering the board to publish documents, information, and reports subject to necessary protections for personal, confidential, and commercial sensitive information.
4. Whistle-blowers and public access. This section must be read with its exceptions

and the wider law. Comparable Bermuda authorities have confidentiality clauses. The Government's briefings clarified that the Employment Act whistle-blower protections continue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government is delivering commitments placed before the electorate and repeated in the March 2025 Throne Speech, but passing the Bill is not the mission accomplished. Success will be measured by clear governance, better decisions, stronger accountability, better support for education, improving schools, and improving outcomes for children.

Throughout this debate, we will hear arguments about autonomy, appointments, ministerial powers, committees, the Commissioner, school boards, student performance reports, amendments, and statutory language, and we should. That is just Parliament doing its job. But the Authority, its board, and its organisational chart are not the outcomes. Are our children learning? Are our schools improving? Are educators properly supported? Are students receiving what they need to succeed? Are we building a system capable of delivering consistently over the long term? Those are the outcomes we desire.

[Madam] Deputy Speaker, we have travelled a long road: the 2007 Hopkins Report, BermudaFirst, Learning First, and the Education Authority Working Group, the 2020 and 2025 PLP platforms, the March 2025 Throne Speech, and years of policy work, consultation, and drafting. Today, the question is no longer whether Bermuda should talk about an Education Authority. The question is whether we are prepared to establish one.

I ask Members to examine the appointment architecture, board powers, ministerial responsibilities, the distinction between enduring governance and transition, consultation requirements, reporting requirements, continuity safeguards, and the requirements for the next substantive stage to return to Parliament.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

Under Standing Order 24 of our Standing Orders, amendments to Bills are supposed to be provided to the other side, and you can direct that they, in fact, be hard copy tabled with the Clerk, and we would invite you to make that direction.

We have not seen any of the amendments that the Minister is talking about, notwithstanding that this is such an important Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister, do you have possession of the amendments?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Deputy Speaker, the digital copy was sent to the Clerk during lunch, and I know that Mr. Lamb has confirmed that he did receive it, and so I did have printed copies brought down in case they hadn't printed any.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Well, in light of the fact that you do have printed copies, we will ask the Sergeant to hand them out, and we will check to make certain that the digital copies of the amendments are on the platform.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: And it was my understanding that the Ministry was informed that hard copies had to be provided as well, so thank you for making certain that they were provided.

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: He doesn't want to give them to me.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: You may continue.

Go ahead.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I ask Members to examine the appointment architecture, board powers, ministerial responsibilities, the distinction between enduring governance and transition, consultation requirements, reporting requirements, continuity, safeguards, and the requirement for the next substantive stage to return to Parliament.

Does this legislation leave Bermuda better equipped to govern public education consistently, professionally, and accountable for the benefits of our children? I believe that it does.

This Bill is not about protecting the authority of the Minister of Education. Quite the opposite. It is about building an education system that does not need to depend upon a Minister to run it. If we genuinely believe that principle, then at some point we must be prepared to let the Authority govern. Independence cannot simply be a slogan. If we genuinely want a professionally governed Authority, we must give its board room to exercise professional judgment within clear statutory guardrails and public accountability. We cannot demand independence from government and replace ministerial micromanagement with parliamentary micromanagement.

Parliament's job is to establish the purpose and powers, guardrails, and accountability. The Authority's job must then be used . . . the Authority's job must be then to use them. Governments will change. Ministers will change. Parliamentarians will change. But Bermuda's commitment to its children must not. Our children should not inherit our political cycles. They should inherit institutions strong enough to endure them. After nearly two decades of discussion, there comes a point when the responsible thing is not to commission another conversation about change, it is to legislate for it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we move this legislation forward, I ask every Member of this Honourable House to leave political agendas on the floor. Let us stay the course. Let us finally deliver an independent structure designed strictly to produce what our children need to thrive in tomorrow's world, not what is convenient for the adults of today. Let our legacy be that we stopped talking, we stopped politicking, and we finally put Bermuda's children first. This is what this Bill does. This is why it is before this House, and this is why I commend the Education Authority Act 2026 to Honourable Members.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member and Opposition Leader, Shadow Minister for Education.

Member, you have the floor. You have a maximum of 60 minutes. All other Members will only have 30 minutes.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I speak to the details and what the Minister has just presented, I want us to go back . . . back in time before the present Minister, back in time before we started to talk about Education Authorities. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, education was a major political issue since the 1990s.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when the Progressive Labour Party became the Government in 1998, one of the major factors on the table was education. It was a focal point. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not bringing that up as blame. I am bringing it up to say that it's been 28 years, 28 years of the problems in education continuing. Multiple administrations, not one.

Madam Deputy Speaker, 28 years is not a political timeline. Think of the children who entered primary school in 1998. They have grown up. They have gone to work, built families and become parents. Some are now sending their own children to the same public school that they attended. We are discussing education reform with a generation who grew up hearing promises of improvement. And many of them have heard the same promises when they sent their children to those same schools that they attended.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that to say that nothing improved in that period of time because that would not be a correct statement. We have students who have continued to flourish within our system. And when we talk about education, we always have to be mindful that we have students who are in that system today. We have teachers who are working hard to educate our children. We have principals that are working hard to run those schools. We have administrators who are helping to have those schools be successful.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a persistent concern from 1998 to where we stand today that maybe our reading results are not what they should be. That our math results are not what they should be. That the support services that are necessary to help the students who fall behind may not have been available at the level that was necessary.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, how can education be a priority for multiple administrations over close to 30 years and we still haven't been able to solve what should be a fundamental right for the students in our country: To provide the foundation for the children that will be the future of this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, consider a child who begins to fall behind in reading. In the early years, it may look like a small gap, a few words they cannot recognise, a paragraph they can't fully understand, a book they are reluctant to open. But reading is the way that child gains success, not just in the classroom, but as they go through the system. It's how they gain success in the other subjects. Because they have to be able to read the math problems. They must be able to read the science explanation. They must be able to read the instructions in any examination they take, and eventually the applications that they will submit to join the workforce. That is how fundamental that is to our society.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, if the gap is not identified and addressed, it becomes harder to close. The child may stop raising their hand. They may lose confidence even when they have the ability or have ideas. That problem can follow them throughout their school life and affect opportunities available to them long after they leave the classroom.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let's think about the parent who's sitting at the kitchen table after work trying to help that child with their homework. Perhaps that parent had the same difficulty in school when they attended. Perhaps they were one of the children we were promising to help 28 years ago. That is what the passage of time can do to people.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we debate education, we are not moving boxes on an organisational chart. We are dealing with the confidence, opportunity, and future of children who cannot go back and reclaim a year that was lost. That history brings me to a fundamental issue, the political cycle and the educational journey. That is what we are trying to solve today. Because, yes, governments change, Ministers

change, policies and priorities change. A Minister may have four or five years to advance a programme, but in many cases, they will have significantly less.

But the child has one childhood, one continuous school life. They cannot put their learning on hold because there is an election coming. And every time a Minister or a party talk about what the priorities should be for education, they may have changed the direction of that young person's educational journey.

This is the major reason why the One Bermuda Alliance has supported an independent Education Authority. We spent a long time talking about it, advocating for it, to move away from the political cycle and focus on the journey of education for a young person. We agree we want a system that can hold a steady course, not interrupted by the political cycle. That does not mean taking away the accountability of Parliament. Government sets the policy, determines the funding, but there must be a clear boundary between those responsibilities and the professional decisions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, independence matters because trust matters. Parents must be able to trust the system even when they disagree with the Government of the day. Teachers and principals must be confident that a sound educational plan will not simply disappear with the next political change. Students need to know that the adults responsible for their education are making decisions for them and not for a political timetable. Confidence in our schools should not rise and fall depending on the confidence in a particular politician. The legislation calls the Authority independent but leaves out the most important decisions to influence. We must ask what actually changed.

Our ambition must go beyond keeping children in school and recording their test scores. A child should be excited to open a book, to ask why something has happened, to test new ideas. The excitement of school and learning is what we should be aiming for. With teachers who have professional support and the freedom to engage with their students to create the curiosity of learning. A child who struggles should receive the help before the frustration becomes a problem that ends up with them falling so far behind, they no longer have that excitement or curiosity for learning. A strong education system does not simply measure failure after the fact. It notices a child when they begin to struggle, responds early, and gives the child reason to believe they can succeed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the lens [through which] I want to approach this Bill. The OBA supports the principle of a genuinely independent Education Authority. But a new name is not enough. We need to know what lessons have been learned from the decades of reform. What will be different in practice on the other side of this? Our children's education must have a longer horizon than our political careers.

That is why independence matters. That is why trust matters. Madam Deputy Speaker, that brings us to how we arrived to where we are today, because the reason there is so much communication and advocacy for moving to independence and keeping it out of the hands of politicians is because that trust has broken down. That confidence has been lost. We can back that up with the number of students who now attend private education instead of public. That is the loss of confidence. Parents choosing to leave Bermuda because they cannot afford the education in the private school and have lost confidence in our public system. Think of what we have done to our parents and students in this last eight to nine years from a political cycle.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to prepare for this debate we spoke to the stakeholders: the parents, the teachers, the principals, the administrators, the same people who I believe the Minister spoke to. But so many people tell us that they cannot recognise their concerns dealt with in the legislation. The question they have is: *What is the consultation?* It should be seeking, listening, considering views, opinions, and concerns of others before making your decision. It shouldn't be trying to convince the people who you are meeting with just to listen to your view.

My first question for the Minister: Is he able to tell us the consultation that he has had since he's returned to this position? Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, there wasn't a lot of movement on this Education Authority when this Minister was not in the seat he resides in today. So, has he had an opportunity to speak to the previous Minister to discuss what the concerns were? Has the Minister had the opportunity to talk to the previous permanent secretary that left in a very similar time period? What were the concerns [of] that permanent secretary who would have been somebody who had a wealth of information?

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I talked about trust and why we have come here today to talk about significant issues, because we have to go above and beyond to rebuild the trust of the parents and the teachers and our students and our public, I stand here today showing you. How can we trust a Minister that brings the amendments and only shares them after a point of order? Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, I guess the five opinion pieces that answered what the feedback was that he was receiving from the same stakeholders as us must have eventually prompted him to make changes.

So, the consultation, once again, needs to go a little deeper, a little further. The Minister wants the Opposition to share with him our views. But every time we asked a question, he gave an answer based off of the fact that we were going to move this legislation in the direction that he has put forward. But today the tune seems to have changed slightly.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe in one of the briefings the Minister said that the document that would become the Education Authority was handed to Chambers in 2021. He can correct me if that isn't the correct date. But what I will say is this has been a long time coming. But having proper sit-down consultation

where you are listening to opinions and working on a better result for the children of this country seems like a better method to me. Because the Minister wants to talk about politics, but bringing the amendments and leaving them in an envelope and not providing them to the Opposition for this debate, seems quite political.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Member is imputing improper motive. There is a requirement to provide the amendments to any Bill that is brought before this House. But Standing Orders do not specify a time when those are brought unless it . . . until . . . and so it cannot be . . . it doesn't need to be brought until the clauses are debated. So, he needs to retract that statement. They were in the House, and they were here for him. And he will have enough time to review those amendments.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I stand by what I said because the issue is once again—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Member is imputing improper motives. And I would ask that the [Deputy] Speaker make a ruling on that.

The Deputy Speaker: And what I will say to that is that when the person stood to their feet on a point of order the amendments were immediately provided. Custom and practice sometimes is when a Minister stands to his feet to read his brief on his Bill. Quite often at that time the Sergeant-at-Arms will hand out the amendments.

That may have been an oversight. But the amendments were here. And I was further instructed that the . . . even though the electronic copy was provided, direction was given by the Clerk to tell them that they also needed to have a hard copy, and a hard copy indeed was brought to the House. So, amendments were provided.

Hon. Ben Smith: I stand to be guided by you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What I . . . what I will say is I am not going to try to put forward what the Minister was thinking on this. I am talking about the . . . [it is] probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that we have debated in this House in a very long time.

I need everybody to understand how serious it is what we are talking about. I said 28 years and more than one generation impacted. So, when we are in this Chamber talking about what it is we are trying to fix, I need everybody to understand the level of seriousness this is that we are discussing. So, I am not talking about motives. I am talking about what we are actually having to deal with as I stand to my feet.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have some questions because as we are asking the population to look at where we are going to an Education Authority, and we advocate for an Education Authority, I think it is important that we lay out where we are today so that we can determine what progress we should be expecting.

And I hope that the Minister can answer me with evidence. What is preventing the Department of Education from delivering the improvements that our children need today? Because many of the things that we are going to be talking about in stage one and stage two are already available. The Education Act. We have departments. We have Ministries. We spend millions of dollars. We have a Commissioner. School leadership. Assessments are done. Improvement plans are done. Those things happen today. We have teachers who know that children are struggling. But are they able to get the support that those students need in a timely fashion? We have parents who have to make multiple appointments in order to get an assessment done, and then once they get the result of the assessment, they have to wait even longer to get the support that is needed. In some cases, years.

So, is the problem a lack of legal authority? Because there are powers that already exist today. Are they not being exercised? Or is it not happening consistently? Is it inadequate funding? Is it insufficient specialist staff? Weak follow-through? Or too many layers of approval? It may be one or all of those. But each one of those things needs a different remedy. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the focus of this has to be better results for our students.

The One Bermuda Alliance spent time looking at the issues that had been brought up by multiple stakeholders. We didn't just look at them as a problem. We said: *What are some of the solutions that can be put forward to fix those issues?* I did reach out to the Minister, which he will accept happened. I then shared with him what these ideas were. And today I got amendments.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, let's start with the first one, the fundamental position. Improved student learning needs to be the foundation of what we are doing today. That should be out front in the legislation, because every decision that is made from this day

forward has to be looking for that result. Because that child [who] that is having that needs that support. And they need that support today, not after 18 months and then further legislation. Although what we will find is most of the things that people are going to want to discuss happen in stage two after all of this process.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the next important point for the Opposition is that if you build this frame that the Minister is referring to, who is going to assess that body on the other side of this? Because we don't want to go back to the political cycle where it happens to be the assessment coming from the politician, because we are moving away from it.

So, an international assessment should be put in right from stage one. Mandatory. To assess the system. To assess the plans that are being put forward. And then to make sure that they are actually being implemented timely. And continuous assessments going forward. And I know the Minister will agree with that concept because the Bermuda College does that. We should be looking towards being certified at a level to show the progress that we have in the system. Because on the other side of whatever we are deciding today should be the goal of world-class public education that can stand up. Not the results that we have seen recently.

That has to be our goal. And we have to make sure that that assessment is put in place. Because as the structure is built, each part of that will need to be assessed. You assess the schools. You assess the teachers. You assess the principals. The same way that we are going to be asking to assess the students. The boards that get created. That needs to be assessed to see if it is actually creating the progress that we're looking for. And also, the Authority. Not by us. By an independent, internationally recognised body.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the major factors that we believe one of the amendments which the Minister has put forward—that I haven't had a chance to read yet because I am on my feet—deals with the first appointments. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, I go back to the trust factor when it comes to education. We shouldn't have to question whether that initial appointment by the Minister has any political attachment to it.

But once trust is broken down, one of the reasons we are having an Education Authority is because we have to separate politics from education. But if the very first step has even a little scent of politics attached to it, have we messed up this brand-new Authority? That can't be what we want. So, we put forward that there are other ways to make that first selection. The Regulatory Authority has ways of selecting people who are going to sit on their boards. Maybe that is an option. Maybe the way the Human Rights Commission selects theirs is another option you can look at. Whatever it is to take away that first piece that makes people say: *Don't trust them.* Because we need them to trust what we are building today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the next piece for us is a board for every school. When we discussed this in the briefing with the Minister, we talked about this particular issue. And one of the answers that came back from the Minister, which sounds valid, is potentially we don't have enough people to do this. The reason we are bringing this up now is because there is a position about "clusters." But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the goal should be that if . . . I say "if" because it is in the legislation. Obviously, the Minister and whoever has been consulting him believes that having boards is a better method for us to get the results we are looking for. Well, if that's the case, you want to make sure that it's connected to the community of that school. So, if there is an opportunity for that individual school to build a board, then that should be the goal. That should be what we are aiming for. Now, if they don't have that ability, then we go to the version that the Minister is referring to where you have clusters so that no school falls behind.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to guarantee you there are some schools in the east and the west that would be really excited to be able to build their own board that deals with their community, because they do not want to have the interference that has happened in recent years with politicians and their schools. That is the reason why I think that is important.

And that's the reason why if you're making the first step, make the first step about what it is you want to happen on the other side of this. And that is not political interference. That is simply laying out if it is in the best interest of our students to have boards in these schools, and there seems to be that. Why are we moving to clusters?

Unless the Minister can tell us that that research says that we don't have enough Bermudians who are willing to be committed, to be focused on that school and that community. And if that is not the case, then we should give them the opportunity to build that board. And once again, when you talk about that international assessment, there's also a way to make sure that each of those boards is trained to get the result that we are looking for, for those boards in the next round. But that only happens if right from the beginning we make it that we want a board for every school.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the next thing for us specifically is making sure that there is a voice for parents, there's a voice for students, and those voices matter. So, there has to be a conversation about PTAs in Bermuda and about what that next step looks like. I just want to leave that as a marker, because it is important that we have those advocates for those students and use the system that is already available to us, but make sure that that student feels the safety to talk about bullying, to talk about the things that are happening within their system. If they feel like they are not getting the support needed, it should be an easy path for that information to be put forward. And there should be a mandatory quick turnaround for the response to those

students. It is too important for us to continue to see our students have to wait the same way that we are having our parents have to wait.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, just a quick point on those boards. One of the major factors about why you want to make sure that they are put together the right way is because we already have questions. And we are not the only ones who have those questions. Because if you build a system that at the top is supposed to have no political interference, but when you get downstream the ability for that interference to be there becomes a problem, you need to make sure from the beginning that if the goal at the top is no political interference, the entire system continues to be built the same way.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is also a section that talks about ministerial direction. I believe it might be another issue that the Minister has an amendment for. Once again, I am not sure yet. I haven't had a chance to read it. But what I will say once again is, if there is a direction, it should be mandated that it is tabled.

And the reason that I say that is because we have just had a situation where Ministers are not supposed to be able to interfere directly in what is happening in a school. But it happened anyway! And nobody in this Chamber has been given information up until now on what happened. We can't continue that on the other side of an Education Authority that is supposed to remove that kind of interference. So, if there is a specific reason, then let's put the sunlight on it. Let's make it transparent. Let's see people. Everybody knows. That way we are going to hold everybody accountable. On the other side of this, that has to be the measure of success.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are also questions within the briefing about finances. I understand that we haven't reached the stage to have that level of detail. A lot of where we are right now is building a frame, and then we are supposed to trust that everything on the other side of it is going to do what everybody thinks is going to happen.

What we are asking for is, let's make sure that each step of the way the finances are provided to the House that show this is the transition, this is what this costs, separate from what is happening in the department. And as we decide to move towards moving the health services into education, moving the maintenance into education, prior to any of that happening, let's make sure that we know exactly how much each of these things cost today, or when we move to this phase, and whether they have been resourced up to what is necessary to that point.

Because, one more time, if you move the system that doesn't seem to be working today over to the new Authority, and we are not going to resource it, and we are not going to give it the funding, and then we have the same result, then who do we blame? Because we can't reach the budget debate and then just see a grant for Education Authority and not be able to dig into it. So, let's make sure that right from the beginning we are going to have all of those finances transparent so that we can hold the entire process to account.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that the Minister had feedback from the unions, from teachers, from principals about what the transition looks like, which I understand the Minister's position that many of these things happen in the next stage. But you can understand the anxiety of people in the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is important that we speak about what is actually happening today. Because in most cases, from a political standpoint, and one of the reasons why you have to separate the politics from it and put sunlight, if we are not getting the results from our students there are multiple factors that are at play. I mentioned that if you have an assessment, and then you don't get the support, that is a factor.

Some households do not have the level of support from the family to put that student on the path for success. If we are honest, we all know that. But in public education we have to make sure that we are building a system that has all of the support services that are necessary so that that student has the same opportunity as a student who might have some of that support system.

But it has got to be right up front that that is the mandate; that's what we're trying to get to. Because we are going to be waiting 18 months plus before we even see what the concept is. So, what we are asking for is let's put some of the bare minimum factors into it from the beginning so that people can feel comfortable, that they can trust what is going to happen on the other side.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do have a comment that has been bothering me for some time when it comes to the Education Authority legislation and when it has come out. Because I mentioned that the Minister said that he . . . I believe it went to Chambers in 2021. And then you see what the issue is when we talk about political interference and political plans and how it doesn't line up with the student's journey.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, today we are building the frame, when reform has been going on for years. And after, this group of independent thinkers and experts are probably going to have to stay with whatever the political move has been up till today. That is why normally you build the frame first. That is the structure you build on. People in Bermuda know it better than anywhere in the world. We build a strong foundation on our houses. This is like papering the kite and then stringing the frame.

You had a political party mandate that moved forward, and has continued to move forward, with a reform based off of what they wanted. And now we are going to build the frame. And it is so far in they can't interrupt and create chaos again, because, Madam Deputy Speaker, this generation of students has only known that. Schools closing, schools not closing. Parish primary school, not a parish primary school.

Refurbishment, not a refurbishment. And when, all of a sudden, the Minister feels the pressure, changes the direction because it is not the best political decision after advocating for months that that was the correct decision.

Just remember those were students and parents who were having to deal with that anxiety time and time again. That was our teachers who were feeling that pressure. Today are we going left or are we going right? Or will the direction change midway through the day?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister has stated, and continues to state, that we will continue on the trajectory that we are on today while this frame is being built. Well, that to me is damning. Because the results that we have seen . . . and let me remind everybody, those results were not just produced because the Minister wanted them to be put out. Those were PATI requests followed by parliamentary questions. That is how we have to get the information today. Which is why we want that information to be produced and put on the website so that the parents and the public can see where we are today. And as the Education Authority moves us in the direction that we want for our students, we can see the progress. We can celebrate the progress. But we should not have the ability for anybody to hide the bad news because it does not get better with time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have reached a point of lost trust, lost confidence, not just in the education system but in the people who have been connected to it. And the Minister knows. Vote of no confidence several times the last time he sat in that seat. So, we can't pretend that wasn't the case. Which is why you have to make sure that when you do this, you do it in a way that that perception can no longer be there. This has to be a clean move forward, because our students deserve it. The world they are about to go into is very complicated. And this is a very serious subject for this country. Almost 30 years on.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to reiterate. We already have a department. We already have assessments. We already have plans that get put in place when a school is falling behind. But the results have been moving in the wrong direction. Moving those responsibilities to an Education Authority will not automatically resolve the underlying problems, Madam Deputy Speaker. I agree with the Minister when it comes to moving the health services to education. That is not where the argument is.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: The argument is that right now you have those services that are under-resourced and understaffed.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: And if you move them over . . . and I am hearing the chirping that that is not the case. The problem with that answer is this: Ask the parents who are sitting in that waiting line for years to get the assessment. Ask them what impact that is having on their children.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: That's the real factor that we are talking about today.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: So, you can make up the excuses and talk about all those things. But if what we are doing today isn't going to fix that. You need to make sure that the solution is present in health before you move it to education. Because it cannot just be: *We've moved it to a different department.* And now we have a new group to blame.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: Because we have heard that over and over again in this House. *Well, that's not my department.*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: That's what we hear over and over again. *That's not my Ministry.*

That can't be how we are going to do this. On the other side we need to be better. And the only way you do that, you have to make sure you have identified the issues before you take the next step. The Minister said it himself. You measure twice; you cut once. You have to make sure that you have that information. Because when you talk to the therapist, they will tell you they are stretched thin.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as somebody who is an educator yourself, you know that students coming to school who have had parents who have been reading to them are going to have an advantage. If that isn't the case, we have to give them the support so that they can level that playing field. But that means you actually have to hire those people to make sure that they are there for that to happen. And if that is not where we are today . . . and maybe we have Ministers who have a different understanding of what's happening today. But I will tell you what: That means they haven't been talking to the parents who are in this system that are waiting in those lines.

An Hon. Member: You are here for one next.

Another Hon. Member: Yes, yes, yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: Of course.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: And I am going to tell you this, just remember something.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Just remember something when you are a Minister and you stand up and you talk about that specific thing. Just remember that not all the parents in Bermuda have the same benefits that you do.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: And that is the part that we have to make sure. We have to advocate for the parents who do not have that level of support. We have to make sure that we give them the services that help them. Because guess what? A Minister can spend the time waiting for an assessment. A Minister has the ability to advocate to get that assessment and then push through that system. But the mother who is working two jobs doesn't have time to do that. And that is the issue that we have. Do not move those problems to a new system. Solve them first.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Oh, and I hear the Minister say *parental responsibility.* Guess what? The issue we have in the country is this: If that parent is not given the support that is necessary, and we continue to ignore it, we pay for it in the back end because they end up at Westgate.

[Desk thumping]

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Ben Smith: And that is the problem with that attitude.

We have to today say: *No longer will we ignore. No longer will we put it on some other Ministry.* We have to understand collective responsibility as people who are standing here talking about education that has been a problem for 28 years!

[Desk thumping and crosstalk]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, think about this, Madam Deputy Speaker. We talk about the maintenance plan. Right now, in the Works and Engineering section, the present Minister talked about what happened in September where certain schools did not have the services that were expected. You better make sure that you have the resources that are necessary so that those situations don't happen just because you have moved the name of the department.

If the services were not available today, you need to know why. And if you are supposed to put air conditioners in a school and no one did an assessment to find out whether the school had enough power to put those air conditioners in the system, will that continue to happen just because you moved it from Works and Engineering over to Education?

Once again, you have to identify those problems and solve them before you move them over. This cannot be that we are simply going to blame the Education Authority five years from now. That can't be where we are. Today has to be the day that we move forward to solve the problem that we have been discussing for 28 years. No more children falling behind.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not the Opposition speaking out against the Education Authority. Let me make that clear. Because we have continued to advocate for an independent Education Authority. What we are stating is when you get this opportunity to shift, make sure you put the things in that are going to protect the future generation.

Because when you move it from where it stands today, with all the systems that are supposed to be for accountability that haven't been working, you better make sure that the system you are moving to is set up to work. That is the reason you actually have to go a little deeper, talk a little more. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government and this Minister believe that the proposals that the One Bermuda Alliance have put forward are not necessary. That was clear yesterday.

The fact that today we have amendments tells me that those voices that we have come to the House today to speak for, because they can't speak for themselves . . . I need this Government to understand you can't ignore them. You can't ignore that student who has been going through this continuous transformation reform. Because we do have students who are coming out on the other side who have done well. But we have a lot of students who have fallen behind.

If over 60 per cent of our students are falling behind in reading, and reading connects to every subject you do, and reading will be necessary for the jobs that are not only available today, but in the future, we cannot continue to pretend that everything is okay. Which is why the focus point has to be: *Let's get this right. Let's get it right today*.

And it is okay if a suggestion comes from the Opposition. I understand that it is very difficult for this Government to do anything that they can't take credit for. But guess what? They can take the credit if that is what they want. It is not important to me. What is important to me is that the result is what is best for our students. That has to be the focal point.

And they need to get up now and justify why in the consultation the Minister just spent the time trying

to get anybody who would listen to the decision that he had already made before he left as the Minister the first time. That is important. And that is why I think it is important for him to tell us whether he actually took in the feedback, and whether there was anything that was brought forward that is not in the Bill right now. Unless what we have is all of a sudden between last night and today he woke up and said: *You know what, I'm going to make some changes because all these weeks, multiple briefings, and five opinion pieces later, I've all of a sudden woken up—*

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Once again, the Member is imputing improper motive. He is imputing improper motive. I do know that he has never been a Government Minister. And he has never been a Member of the Government that has led. But he would know . . . he would know that the way drafting works, it is impossible for me to wake up one night and say I want amendments done, and then they appear the next day. It just doesn't work that way. It does not work that way, Madam Deputy Speaker, and he's imputing improper motive, and he needs to retract that statement.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. You have five seconds.

Hon. Ben Smith: Madam Deputy Speaker, the truth is we asked him to rise and report so that we could have a proper debate, and he brought amendments at the last second.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

One second, Minister, before I recognise you to speak, I recognise the Minister from constituency 15.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today, and I will say this at the very beginning.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam [Deputy] Speaker, it is very disappointing that a topic of this magnitude, and a topic that matters so much to so many people will start with Members from the other side thinking that it is a joke.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Start with a joke.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today, and I will say it at the start of my speech.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading and imputing improper motive]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [Madam] Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House and imputing improper motive. No one is taking anything as a joke. In fact, there's more laughing going on over there than over here. So, I don't know what the Minister is talking about. He needs to get to the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, continue.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today in support of the Education Authority Bill. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will start with a quote from Nelson Mandela. It says*: It always seems impossible until it's done.*

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you why this one matters to me personally. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have said to multiple people on the street, I don't debate education on the street. Madam Deputy Speaker, I tell people this is [a] serious matter. And if you want to have a serious conversation, we can do so. But it is not just for political points or gain.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you may say: *Well, why are you speaking on this one today?* The Middle English word for “parliament” means to have a discussion, to have a conversation, to have a conference. The French word means simply, Madam Deputy Speaker, to speak.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you would know, and many others, that I am a teacher by profession. I spent 15 years teaching at both of our public high schools, CedarBridge Academy first, under the leadership of Kalmar Richards. I then transferred to my alma mater, The Berkeley Institute, where you were one of my colleagues at one time, Madam Deputy Speaker, under the leadership of the late Senator Ms. Michelle Gabisi Simmons. And then I went back and I taught.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am the son of an educator. My mother dedicated more than 40 years of her life educating Bermuda's children, including serving in leadership within the Department of Education. Madam Deputy Speaker, as a tidbit, my mother speaks with great pride that she was the teacher of today's Opposition Leader.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am also a father. My children, and I will call them by name, Tatum, who is 15 and attends The Berkeley Institute, and Oliver, who is 10 and attends Harrington Sound Primary School. Madam Deputy Speaker, you will know and others will know, these are both public schools. And like many parents across this Island, I have seen the very best of our public schools. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was also seeing things that have left me frustrated. They have left me disappointed, and they have left me wondering: *Why can't we do better?*

We have heard from the Opposition Leader today. We have heard from his colleagues. We've heard from everyone. So, I can tell you categorically, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not the only parent who feels this way. I have had the privilege of speaking in a different place as a spokesman for education for a number of years. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have never been one to keep quiet about education, not while I was teaching, not while I was in the Senate. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I certainly won't keep quiet at a table that I sit at on Tuesdays on 105 Front Street, and my colleagues will attest to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not supporting this Bill simply because I am a Member of the Government. I support it because I believe in public education. I have spent my life, and much of it, working in it. I believe that every child in this country deserves a good education, regardless, *regardless* of who their parents are, where they live, or what challenges they face. Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe we also have to be honest, and honest enough to admit that somewhere along the way, we have lost sight of what actually matters most.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when education reform was first being discussed, I didn't simply ask the Minister of Education what he thought we should do. And this is where the speaking part comes in. I spoke only to people that I trust: My mom, the Opposition Leader's former teacher, teachers, principals, people that I have known for years. Believe it or not, I even had conversations with my children. They could not get into the nitty gritty like we are here, but they knew what was going on. And I paid attention to what parents were saying in chat groups—yes, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, chat groups—because sometimes it is with your chat groups that you really hear what people are dealing with. You really hear what people think.

Let me break the cardinal sin, Madam Deputy Speaker, because everyone in a chat group should know that you should never discuss outside of a chat group what is happening in that chat group. But let's talk about my first chat group that I have three friends and myself in. Between us, we have six children ranging from ages six to 15, all in the public education system. Madam Deputy Speaker, today I speak for that chat group.

In another chat group, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have 13 friends. I counted 21 children. And many of those friends have felt forced to find alternative options to educate their children. Madam Deputy Speaker, today I speak for that chat group.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also speak for the 108 students in [constituency] 15 Pembroke East whose parents voted for me to be their representative. I speak for them, Madam Deputy Speaker.

They did not all have the same perspective, but there was something that came through clearly. Somewhere along the way (I will say it again) we lost sight of what matters most, and that is the children in our classrooms. Not because we stopped caring about education; people care about education in this country. We have excellent teachers. We have excellent principals, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have parents like myself who want the best for their children. But far too many of them have become frustrated by a system that is not working the way it should be. And certainly, it is not because we have not spent enough time studying it. We have had report[s] . . . we have had report[s], reviews, commissions, [and] recommendation plans.

Let's talk about the Hopkins Report, Madam Deputy Speaker. It happened in 2007, about 20 years ago. Madam Deputy Speaker, believe it or not, names were not called, but I actually was mentioned in that report. They came into my classroom. I remember it like it was yesterday. I said, *Who are these people, and why are they here?* [I] did not know. No one told me what they were coming for. But then you read a section in the report which talked about what they observed in that classroom.

I recently heard a term that sums up where we find ourselves today, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is called *analysis paralysis*. How many reports do we need, Madam Deputy Speaker? We have been talking about some of these same problems. The Opposition and others have been talking about bringing an Education Authority for years. Our children, my children, have waited long enough for us to act on what we already know.

Let's take a look. Let's look deeply at the system that we built. Somewhere, we got caught up looking after a system, looking into a system that we created, and we forgot that this system was supposed to be looking after our children.

Let me make that clear. I am not standing here to criticise teachers. As a teacher myself, a son of a teacher, I know the pressures. I know the demands, Madam Deputy Speaker, as do you, of that particular profession. Teachers are often the people working the hardest to compensate for the shortcomings of a system that is around them. But over time, every system

develops some habits. We make decisions about where responsibilities sit, how services are organised, who reports to whom, who controls these resources, and how decisions are made. Sometimes we keep doing the same things over and over, simply because that is how we always do it, because they suit someone, because they make someone's job as an administrator easier, because changing them, Madam Deputy Speaker ([what] I said and where I started) would be difficult. It always seems impossible until it is done.

Sometimes a school knows exactly what a child needs, but it does not have that authority or the resources to respond. Sometimes a parent is sent from one person to another, trying to find out who is responsible for making [that] happen. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask you to ask me: *Well, how do you know that?* Because sometimes we are more concerned about whether the rules were followed or whether a child actually got the help that they actually need.

Let me give you this story. I remember being approached as a Minister of the Government in a grocery store by someone who worked in [the] public school system. They raised a concern with me. I passed it on to my ministerial colleague, the Minister of Education, which he passed to the Ministry of Education because I believed that their concern, one of my constituents, needed attention. But instead of the problem being dealt with, the actual person who spoke to me was disciplined for raising the concern with me. And the original problem was still there. Madam Deputy Speaker. Something is seriously wrong when that happens, and it should concern every one of us.

When I say *we* need to do better, Madam Deputy Speaker, I include myself. *I include myself*. I include this Government. I include previous Governments. I include those who run our education system, those who have a say in how it operates. We all take a share of this responsibility.

And parents, we have responsibilities too. We need parents to take the interest in their children, support their learning at home, and work with their schools.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I know this is harder for some families than others. I get that. I recognise it. I acknowledge it. And we have the responsibility to help those families who need our assistance. But we cannot expect the schools to do it on their own. Teachers matter, Madam Deputy Speaker. Parents matter. Principals matter. But the whole system is there for one reason, to give our children the education that they ultimately deserve.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I keep coming back to one question. Is this Education Authority in the best interest of our children? Not whether it is easy for Government, not whether it suits the people running the system, but whether it will make a real difference to the children that are sitting in our classrooms. And when I apply that test to the establishment of an Education Authority, the answer that I come back with is yes. Establishing an Education Authority is that step in the right direction.

The idea of an Education Authority is not new. For years, we have been told that our education system needs clearer governance. It needs leadership. It needs better support for schools and people who can be held responsible for results.

We want to acknowledge, and I will acknowledge, the work of my ministerial colleague, Minister Rabain, his predecessors, education professionals, including the Bermudians who volunteered their time to work on the Education Authority Working Group—my former boss, former colleague of mine, Ms. Lisa De Silva, who led the Education Reform Unit, and the many people who have contributed to getting us to this exact point. I recognise the work that they have done, and I say thank you.

But the question before us today is whether we collectively, both sides, are prepared to take another important step in addressing those long-standing problems. What do I think? I started with it. I believe that we should. An Education Authority offers us the opportunity to establish a clear responsibility for the governance and leadership of public education. It offers the opportunity to bring people together, the expertise needed to support the schools, plan the future, manage resources, and maintain a consistent focus on outcomes. And importantly, it offers the opportunity for continuity because, Madam Deputy Speaker, educating a child is a long-term undertaking.

And I want us to stick with the work long enough to see it make a difference. A child does not stop learning because there is an election. A child does not stop learning because someone says that there is a change in Minister and we should start all over again.

But let me be equally clear, and I want you to listen to this one really carefully. Creating an Authority will not, by itself, improve my son or anybody else's child's reading. It will not, by itself, make my son or any other student more confident in mathematics. And it will not automatically ensure that a child like my son, who needs additional support, actually receives it. But I believe that this Bill gives us the next best chance, Madam Deputy Speaker, to put us and the right people in place to support those decisions to make those things happen.

I have listened to some of the concerns raised by . . . and in this Bill. People want to know what this Authority will look like, who is going to run it, when things will actually change. Those are all fair questions, of course. But this Bill sets up the Authority. It then gives us that time. My real opinion [is] we need to be moving faster. But it gives us the time as to how it will operate before the bigger changes are then brought back to this Parliament.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that some people want to see things change tomorrow. I am one of those people. I understand it. But we are talking

about changing how an entire public school system is run. You cannot just turn up on Monday morning, change the name on the door, and say: *Let's go. We are doing things differently.* It does not work like that. We need to do it properly, and we also need to get cracking with it.

But let's be clear. Taking this in stages does not mean dragging our feet. As I said before, we have got enough of those reports sitting up on shelves somewhere in this country. But that is why this Authority will have to report back with its recommendations, and the Government will have to explain to this House if the next stage is delayed. Careful implementation and a sense of urgency are not mutually exclusive. We have a responsibility to get this right. And we have a responsibility to move.

Let's talk about the independence and how this Education Authority should be set up. There are those who believe that the Bill should go further in separating the Authority from the Minister. Fair. But I think we need to be clear about what independence actually means. Independence is not a single switch that you turn on and off. There are different degrees, different forms of independence, depending on the functions of that institution and the responsibilities that it carries. Independence does not mean absence of accountability. And ministerial accountability does not mean that a Minister should be making every operational decision.

I deal with this issue. I have dealt with it in my own Ministry. I understand first hand that these questions are not always straightforward. Different bodies have different purposes, different responsibilities, [and] different governance requirements. And I am quite comfortable engaging in a serious debate about how we make those arrangements fit for purpose.

Let's talk about the Bermuda Tourism Authority. I have not heard about it in a while. When I took responsibility for Tourism, we could see that changes were needed. We needed the right people on the board. We needed strong leadership, and we needed an organisation that was focused on delivering for Bermuda. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, that does not mean as Minister I should be running the Bermuda Tourism Authority. I should not be getting into their day-to-day operations. And that is why you have a board and you have professional leadership. My job is always to make sure that we have the right people in place, that they understood what was expected of them, and they had the room to get on with the job. And I am pleased, Madam Deputy Speaker, of where that organisation is today.

There is a balance that we need to get right with this Education Authority, and I believe this Bill gives us a sensible place to start. And as the Education Authority takes on more responsibility, we will need to look again as to how much freedom it has and who we hold accountable.

I have heard people say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that teachers, principals, and parents have not had enough say in education reform. Let me speak to that, because I have been involved in these discussions.

I have attended meetings as a parent at Harrington Sound Primary School. My son reminds me regularly that it is no longer Harrington Sound Primary School that I went to, it is the Harrington Sound Parish School. I have addressed teachers and principals throughout my time as the Education spokesman in another place. I have been involved in discussions at CedarBridge Academy about their culinary arts programme. Next week I will be up at Sandys Secondary [Middle School], where the Hospitality and Tourism Programme is directly connected to the future of an industry that matters enormously to Bermuda. So, I have been involved as a parent, a former teacher, an Education spokesperson, [and] a Minister.

I have no problem with people challenging the Government. You can write to the newspaper. You can speak out. You can ask those difficult questions. That is part of living in the democracy. But I would also ask that people choose to be part of this work. Come to the meetings. Tell us what you think about these changes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Bring your ideas because when we move to the next stage, it is going to need teachers, principals, parents, and the wider community to all get on board and work together.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me finish to make it clear to those who were listening where I began. I want to talk about our children. When I think about what we should be trying to achieve, it is quite simple. This is what we all want, I think. An education system where, one, every child has the opportunity to develop strong foundations in literacy and numeracy; two, where children who are falling behind are noticed early and receive the help that they need; where school principals are given both the authority as well as the responsibility to improve their schools; where parents can raise a problem and know who is responsible for getting this problem right.

That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is what I want us all to be accountable for, not simply whether the right report was submitted, not whether another meeting took place, but whether our children are learning and getting the help that they need to leave school ready for what comes next.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as a parent, I know how much trust we put in the education system. Every morning our parents [and] our grandparents across this Island send their children to school. They trust us to keep their children safe, teach them well, and give them a fair chance. And every one of us sitting in this honourable place, Madam Deputy Speaker, was elected by the people who expect us to stand up for them. That includes those parents. That includes the grandparents who are worried about their [grandchildren's] education. And it includes the children who are depending on us, Madam Deputy Speaker, to get this right. I cannot

think of any more responsibilities that are more important than that.

We have spent years talking about what is wrong. We have had the reports. We have had the debates. We have heard from teachers. We have heard from parents. We have heard from the experts. Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have the responsibility to act. And when we look back on this decision, whether it be five years from now, whether we look back on this decision 10 years from now, I do not want us just to be talking about how well we set up an Authority. I want us to be talking about how much better our children, my son, is doing in school.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it always seems impossible until it is done. Madam Deputy Speaker, for those reasons I have listed out in the last 25 minutes, I fully support the Education Authority Bill 2026.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, and good afternoon, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

I want to extend my well wishes to the previous speaker because I think he encapsulated a lot of the urgency regarding this legislation. I stand today as a proud parent of a young man that attends Purvis Primary *[sic].* And in that vein—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh yes, yes, yes. Okay. Purvis Parish School. Thank you, Minister.

And I have been a long-time advocate for an Education Authority. And I want to frame this debate because I feel if folks were listening, they may assume that it was a for-or-against argument. And that is not the case. We, the One Bermuda Alliance, support an independent Education Authority. The debate today is whether there are enough guardrails in this current legislation to ensure the success of Phase 2 and following phases. And I want people to sit with that because this is not a conversation about whether or not an independent Education Authority is the answer. This is a conversation about how we ensure that it is done correctly and that the foundation is strong enough to carry it through several phases.

Though I may be young, I have a memory of the same gusto and vigour from the Government when it came to convincing the public of signature schools and the parish primary reforms, which led to a lot of uncertainty in our community, whether the intention was good or not. And because we have seen that on this side, we are now saying we welcome the Government in embracing an independent Education Authority. What we do not welcome is that they seem to be poised to make the same mistakes.

It is not enough to say: *Trust me*. It is not suitable to say: *Yes, we will pledge. We will commit.* How many Education Ministers have stood there, committed, and pledged for over 40 years? When will—

An Hon. Member: Four.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh. Four.

When will we get to a point where we enshrine protections and guardrails within our legislation so that successive Ministers and Governments are bound not go back, cut, change, and amend, as we see often with this Government? We will bring back amendments after they see that things that have been said to them on this side turn out to be true. Why wait?

At this point, what we are asking for is that the Minister consider the concerns that we have regarding this legislation, and that we can work together to implement those concerns into the legislation and pass it. I repeat, *and pass it,* because we have ad hoc house sittings where we have sat through a lot longer than usual. And I am not complaining; but it gives us the opportunity to pause, work together, implement concerns, bring the Bill back, and pass it.

So, what I am afraid of is that we are going to hear a lot of righteous indignation and, *How could the Opposition not support this?* and dah, dah, dah. No, we support it. We support the idea of an independent Education Authority. As this current legislation stands, we have very little whistle-blower protection with reports being distributed directly to the Minister. We want public accountability because, as the previous speaker said, everyone will have to work together on this—parents, teachers, the Opposition, Government. How can we do that if we have to rely on PATI [Public Access to Information] requests and parliamentary questions to get proper data? It is unacceptable. And I challenge anyone who speaks after me to explain to me how that is acceptable by the current legislation we have in front of us, that we are finding out that our children are struggling in numeracy, struggling with literacy.

After nine years, this Cabinet has lost the opportunity to say: *Well, we must move with urgency. Well, we must push forward.* We were calling for an Education Authority. And I believe it was in their platform as well for quite some time. So, I do not want to . . . In my humble opinion, I really do not think the people want to hear more of this: *Well, we need to move. We need to have some gusto.* Nine years, millions of dollars later, and then some sit and say on the other side: *Well, you do not want us to do anything. We should just do nothing.* You have now brought forward an Education Authority that has been called for, for over seven years. After amendments have already been passed, parish primaries are already in effect.

So, if that independent Education Authority comes back with a report that says those reforms were

damning, and they have led to some of the issues that we have today . . . We do not know. But I am saying if that independent Authority says: *Well, we need to now go back and redo that. Maybe signature schools are not the way to go.* What then will the Minister and this Government say about those millions spent? Will they say: *Well, this is the recommendation of the independent Education Authority? And therefore, we just expect the Opposition to forgive and forget. We expect the public to forgive and forget.*

In any other position, in the private sector, you would be fired. *Sorry*. Because you are talking about something that is going to affect my son, I am not mincing words today. You will be fired.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And that is fine. It can happen again.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: That's fine because—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: That's good that the Minister said that is what happened in 2017, because I believe in accountability. And I think that they should be careful because their day may be coming as well.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Hey, excuse me. Excuse me—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I know they said that, but I think the previous speaker said it was impossible until it happens. Right?

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, I think they better listen to their own Member before they start making those chirpings. Right?

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Okay. So,—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —what I want to say is there is a trust deficit that we cannot ignore. This is not a sense of, *Well, we just do not want to move forward.* How can we trust that Phase 2 will continue the way in which it has been stated by this Minister, because it is quite apparent to the public and to the Opposition that Ministers can change? And if we are going to write legislation that based itself on this Minister's and this current Cabinet's will to push something forward, what happens when they are not the Cabinet? And they do not need a general election for that. They have one of their own coming out that could determine that change. So, we have to put things in legislation to ensure that these protections are made.

We have brought forward 10 points that we believe . . . and I think the leader touched on a good bit of them . . . that we believe will help strengthen this legislation and also lead to renewing trust in our current system. Because right now, we . . . And I say we, because I also think that all of us must take accountability. We have failed in our social contract to the people of Bermuda. When they pay taxes for public school education, it is unacceptable that high percentages of their children, our grandchildren, our nieces, nephews, sons, [and] daughters, are graduating and cannot do basic math and cannot read. It is unacceptable. So, again—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, please.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Member is (it could be unintentionally) misleading the House. In the public school system, there is a graduation requirement that requires that all students have passes at four international exams. One . . . And those are the GCE exams, IGCSE exams: math, English, science (and you would know as an educator), and social science. So, for that Member to say that someone is graduating and cannot read is false.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to be very cautious here because that point of order is exactly the problem because all of us (as somebody who has worked in multiple fields) have come across folks who have graduated who struggle to read. I worked probably as a cashier in my earlier years. And one of the greatest barriers to becoming a cashier for many was to pass the basic math test that was required by The Marketplace.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It is both. You got a problem?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, I say that the Member is unintentionally misleading the House. These international exams that are required to be passed are not graded in Bermuda. They are graded by Cambridge—

An Hon. Member: What does that have to do with this?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And so, I fully accept that he may have employed someone who may have difficulty reading. But I am telling him that no one can graduate from the Bermuda public school system without passes in four international exams that are not graded by locals.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I am not even going to go back and forward on it because I think the Minister will have to take that up with the public who have tons and tons of evidence that is contrary to that. It is not about whether or not people can pass. Anyone . . . I can study up and pass a test. It does not mean that I have really digested the information. But I want to go big picture, because I am not going to debate reality in this Chamber. I am really not. I am not. And just to be clear—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And just to be clear, I did not hire these folks. Right? This was an employment *[sic]* that took that test. They deduced that they wanted more Bermudian employees to be able to do cash registers, and they could not pass that test. That is a fact. It has nothing to do with the point of order that the Minister just said.

And if we want to debate about passing, then we could debate also about the children who are disappearing out of our system completely.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, there is a truancy metric as well in one of these points that we have put forward to ensure that children are properly accounted for within our education system, something that I think we all want. I cannot understand why these 10 points are contentious or maybe not wished to be considered.

But I believe that all of us wish to see the same things. We all do. We all want to have an education system that allows Bermudians to compete on an international level, to exceed, to go to whatever dreams, and do whatever they wish to do. But at the end of the day, I think that we also have to, again, look at the reality of how we got here.

We have had ministerial changes. We have had policy U-turns. We have had open demonstrations from parents. We have had open discussions from the Bermuda Union of Teachers [BUT] of loss of support in their leadership. So, for us to look at all that has transpired over the last nine years in education and to say: *Oh yes, absolutely, we will trust that Phase 2 will go quite well. We do not have to know the numbers. We do not have to know any specifics of Phase 2. We will trust that you will get it done.* I am sorry, but that is just not going to cut it for me. It is not.

An independent Authority, independent in operation, but publicly accountable . . . It must be accountable to the public. As of right now, it is not saying that Parliament should have more oversight on the independent Education Authority. We are advocating that there should be more guardrails, accountability, and transparency to Parliament and to the public in this legislation.

[A] $25,000 fine . . . [a] $25,000 fine for giving information outside of the Authority and the Minister. When information is already hard to come by and accountability is already hard to come by, we have to be careful about what message the legislation is sending.

So, I call on the Minister to consider a rise and report so that . . . I mean, we could scramble. We could put our heads together and get it done by November 30 for the sitting and pass it. It does not even have to go past the month. It does not have to go into the new year. But I implore those 10 points to be considered because then we can have a bipartisan buy-in and also concerns and issues that have been brought to us by pertinent stakeholders can be considered.

That way, when the Minister stands to his feet and calls on the community to get behind the Education Authority, as we all should to ensure the success of our children, he will know that points from the Opposition and concerned stakeholders, not just the ones he was talking to, have been implemented in this legislation as a way to be collaborative and to ensure that there is proper buy-in because that is what we need.

We cannot be here another two or three years down the line debating again about results that we are not satisfied with and pointing the finger because one side tried to bring something forward to strengthen legislation and that was denied. But yet, we walk in and we see amendments brought here today. That same process can happen.

So, I rise today to make sure that we do not leave the Chamber with a for-or-against mentality. It is a for-the-Education-Authority [mentality]. But it is for stronger legislation and tighter guardrails to ensure that the Government's long-term plan survives them, us, and anyone who may come after them to ensure that no matter who takes on that mantle next the legislation

has a clear objective: We want our children to succeed, [however] that objective can be legislatively written, that we will have a publicly accountable Education Authority. We will release the statistics, the data, publicly so parents can look at how the schools are making out, not just the children, but the community can buy into saying: *Wow, look at Purvis Primary's statistics. Look at where they are. They are excelling, and I have numbers to prove that.*

It is pride. It is not just about political policy. It is about restoring pride in our community about their education system [so] that they do not have to save up $20,000 a year or hundreds of extra dollars to pay for a tutor if they cannot get into a private school where you have private schools with waiting lists of over 500 students. And I asked. So, that is the stat that was given to me from a private school, and I know because we considered it before Purvis. [We] could not get in, and that is okay. We ended up thinking that Purvis was the right way to go because of the dual language programme. So, there are bright things happening in the public education system. So, I do not want it to be a misconstrued debate that one side is saying the public education system is complete garbage. That is not true.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And so—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, actually, you are right.

And so, with that, I just want to end on this. It is something that we, both sides of the House, both sides of the House, support. So, I would implore Members to put aside the partisan and understand that this is an opportunity for us to strengthen the Bill and make it bipartisan to take to the community in a joint fashion, which we all can support. Go home and begin the work of being there for our children under something that we know will benefit them.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want my child to succeed. And I will do all I can as a parent. But we also have to acknowledge that there are parents working two or three jobs. Technically, all of us in here work two jobs. And we have to also understand that a system is there as a fail-safe for parents who may not have the time they wish to have due to whatever circumstance to ensure [the] success of their children because they pay taxes for that. And I am not going to excuse parental responsibility. Because, like I said before, all of us must come together on this. But at the same time, we have a social contract to the people of Bermuda to ensure that our public education system makes sure that their children, our children, my children, excel. And that has to be the focus.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Minister from constituency 4.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Heh. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I stand, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a parent, as an occupational therapist who has worked in the school system, as an aunt of a nephew that is currently in public education. My children did . . . My son attended public education throughout his entire . . .

The Deputy Speaker: School life.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —school life. He is now in college. And my daughter attended up until middle school.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But I say that to say that education can be very, *is* (I want to qualify) *is,* and should be very emotional for any parent who wants to see their child succeed. You know what it feels like when you experience your child not doing well. You want to do everything possible to allow them to have some level of success. Every child that comes into the public education system comes with a different paradigm, different experiences, different abilities, different skills. Therefore, we cannot put everyone in the same box. And that itself will come with challenges within a school system because it is not that easy. And then education constantly evolves. And I will get into that a little bit later as well.

But I have to remind our Members on the other side who we are again. We are the Progressive Labour Party. *Progressive*, whether that progress is small, whether or not that progress is medium, or whether or not that progress is large, we have to start somewhere.

Today we are here debating the Education Authority Act 2026, which I support. And really when the Minister first introduced this Act to us, my own thoughts . . . I was like, *Wow! We [have] got some ways to go.* But I am glad that we are here today with something to develop. This Act, Madam Deputy Speaker, is an establishment Act, a development Act, we can call it a transitional Act. It is not going to be perfect. And the Minister will tell you that I believe this, being the first Act of the Education Authority, has gone through 13 drafts. And while we have come to this House and we have brought many pieces of legislation, many of them, actually the majority of them, Madam Deputy Speaker, have been amendments to Acts. And so, we understand that we can make changes to legislation because not every time do we get it right. And as the country evolves, as education evolves, we will have to come

back and make changes to even the second phase of the Education Authority Act [2026].

We are embarking upon building the Authority, a promise we made to the people of Bermuda. And now we are at a place where we are progressing the Education Authority Act [2026]. It is a big job. It is a big, big step and a big responsibility because education, in my experience of politics, has been a huge political football. And parents and staff, educators, they know how to, you know, move and shake some things if it is in [the] public interest. And we are trying to remove some of that division that we create politically around education.

We all, you know, talk to parents and teachers within the . . . or educators, within the education system. We are standing here today to say that we have heard you. We, again, know that there are many imperfections. But we want to be able to make education better for our students, for our educators, for our parents here in Bermuda. We care. Everyone, I am sure, in this room cares about the educational system that we have for our children and for our people. We want what is best for our students, our educators, our citizens, and our country.

It is hard, I would imagine, to be the Minister of Education. It is hard with the emotional aspect associated with the children in our lives.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: And if you check the history, because it is known how many Education Ministers we have had over the years, that is also proof that this portfolio is a very challenging one. It is emotionally charged because when the depth of success of each and every child in our education system is placed in the responsibility of the Minister . . . You know, the Minister puts himself forward, and a lot of the blame gets directed to the Minister. And while we may be quick to point fingers, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are all in this together.

As important as this topic is, education, the number one of the number one thing that our people tell us is very important to them, I would expect everyone in this room to get to their feet, and to speak about this Education Authority, because we care about our education system, we care about our children, we care about our future. We care about the economic prospects of our country.

To our educators, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Another Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Because they have sacrificed so much, the time, the diversity of learning abilities [and] learning styles in the classroom. You just cannot go into a classroom anymore and teach. You think you are going to get through. You know, you plan your day. You plan your content. You think everything is going to go smoothly. Right? It does not go that way anymore. You know? It does not work that way, where everybody is going to sit down and be focused and have attention. You know, you have got Johnny pulling somebody's hair. Somebody [is] swiping something off someone's desk. Somebody is chatting over here. Someone is jumping up and down. It is challenging. It is challenging being an educator today. And so again, we want to thank you for your sacrifice and your commitment to our children.

If the Education Authority fails to stay connected to our children, our parents, and our teachers, then they will not have understood the assignment. And so, while we hear, you know, more boards or councils need to be created with parents on them, it is very important. But I have faith and trust that the board that will be put together, the leadership that will be put together, will have our students' best interests at heart, our parents' best interests at heart, our educators' best interests at heart because we cannot afford . . . we cannot afford any more time to be wasted.

You see, I believe our parents are the biggest stakeholders in all of this. We want the outcomes for our children, but parents need to be supported so that they can support their children. As a parent myself, knowing what the research shows . . . Particularly when you have an involved parent, there is research to demonstrate that your children do better. When you attend those PTA meetings, when you attend those parent-teacher meetings, when you go a little bit further and you help your children with their homework so that you understand when they are not getting some concept, you go to the teacher and you say: *You know, I helped them with the homework, and they do not seem to be getting this. What can I do?* We cannot expect to just send our children to school and not have any involvement, just send them to school so that the school can fix or just educate our children. It should be a shared sacrifice, a shared involvement. And so, I am hopeful that the Education Authority will continue to use our parents, our children, and our educators as stakeholders all throughout this process.

I will declare, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am in support of public sharing of student performance. It creates a higher level of accountability (right?) of how our children are actually performing. Right? I also believe strongly in parental responsibility and parental involvement.

This board, this Bill, gives the brevity and the flexibility to include our parents, our educators, our professionals, our important stakeholders because they will have a tough job. *A tough job*, particularly as we continue to go and live our lives in this technology revolution. This is what we are dealing with. We are dealing with children who are disconnected socially. We are dealing with children who are being fed by technology

and AI, information through AI. It feeds us information constantly in volume. It can be much.

And our children's ability to retain information and their memory is affected. To retain information is becoming more and more challenging. The devices in front of our children also affect their ability to focus and their ability to stay attentive.

I was speaking with a preschool teacher, actually yesterday. And the teacher shared with me that she could lay out on the carpet all the puzzles, all the blocks, all those activities that will help to foster fine motor abilities and gross motor abilities. And the minute she pulls out the tablet, all the children are running towards it.

Children model what they see. And so, when I mentioned that, I also want to go back to parental responsibility as well because we must be able to control and put limits and guidelines on the amount of exposure. It has to be a balance that our children are having with technology. It is showing up. It is showing up in our children's performance.

This Education Authority speaks to the ability for the Ministry or the Authority to hire support services. And I only want to speak to . . . I can only speak to being an occupational therapist because that is my profession. We have heard that we do not have enough resources. And while we want more, I want the public who is listening to know that Bermuda, although we want more and we need more, we are well resourced when we compare ourselves to the other small state jurisdictions.

Bermuda has approximately 37 occupational therapists. Guyana has approximately 17. The Cayman Islands has 21. The Bahamas has approximately 11. Jamaica has approximately 8. And when we compare Bermuda's population to the populations of those countries that I have just mentioned, Bermuda is faring well, even though we need more. We are needing more because our children, Madam Deputy Speaker, are requiring a lot more intervention, a lot more intervention.

And so, this Authority is going to have their hands full because we are going to have to look at evidence-based performance and what is actually working for our children, our evolving education system. Our students, Madam Deputy Speaker, are experiencing challenges.

We are here with the first Education Authority Act. We are building. *We are building.* Just to reiterate, [there were] 13 drafts already with amendments to be on the floor with us today. We just need to get on with it. Get on with it, not waste any more time. We will continue to make amendments as they are needed going forward. But we need to put these decisions . . . We need to show . . . we need to show how serious we are about education for the children, for the citizens of Bermuda.

This is only part of the formula, Madam Deputy Speaker. Only part of the formula. [There is] so much more. [There is] so much more. And so here we are. We are building. And we must continue to do this with the stakeholders of our parents, our educators, and our students.

Again, we do not . . . we should not want to delay progress to try to get a perfect Education Authority Act. It is not going to be perfect. Chambers spent a huge ordeal of time, personnel. In the Education Department, [they] spent a great ordeal of time to get us to where we are today.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Twenty years. If you actually study transformation of education systems, Minister, they take years. Years. Years. Years. Years.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Wow. Take two weeks? Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: So, I am just ending with this. I support this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. Again, we must understand this is an establishment Act, a transitional Act, a development Act. And we look forward to the work that will come out of this Education Authority for the betterment of education in Bermuda.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Member from constituency 10.

Mr. Robert King: —Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert King: Wow. I was taken on quite an emotional roller coaster there when we were talking about an education system based on faith and trust. And for a moment there, I thought for a moment that maybe the teachers were the victim in all this because teaching is so difficult. They have to deal with so many different behaviours. And then what struck me is these are the people whose job it is to educate our children. As we have always known, the power of an education is the greatest equaliser. It is a daunting responsibility. It must be taken seriously and suitably resourced.

As we have heard on numerous occasions from this Government, money is not the issue. [There is a] surplus, plenty of money to go around, especially if it is given to the right persons to do the right job, persons who are qualified to do that, and there is proper

oversight and enforcement. And when we have the information from various assessments, from the teachers themselves, from the Bermuda Trade Union Congress, from the teachers, the kids themselves, and the results, we know that the system is failing.

And the principle of having an Education Authority . . . The House, in principle, is in support of that. And we also know that the Authority has to be given the resources and the autonomy to do this important job.

The issue that we have is that, historically, authorities . . . For example, you have got the Bermuda Tourism Authority. When it truly had independence, it worked very well, and then something happened. And then we had a series of persons who assumed the role of chairman or the person in charge. We have a situation where there is an obvious conflict of interest when you have a government that is funding the schools, is paying for the principal, and a teacher or a parent who may or may not work for a government in the civil service or for BIU [Bermuda Industrial Union] or [in a] unionised job, being able to express concerns without fear for the benefit of the children.

We also know that incarcerated persons . . . And I am going to bang on about this, because if we are serious about rehabilitation, we know that offence-related, risk-specific programmes and vocational and educational programmes should be delivered [as] consistently as other programmes offered in the community are. And what we do know is despite the amount of money that the Government has, the civil service is approximately 900 people short. So, if we want to compare ourselves to other jurisdictions like Guyana, Cayman, and others, we should not cherry-pick because we are comparing ourselves to countries whose murder rates are higher. But I would suggest without proof—I mean, we like to use anecdotes here—that the kids who are in their schools are doing much better because it is a life-or-death proposition. We are fortunate that it is not so, not because of that.

However, what we do know is that more persons are being hired in international business who are not from Bermuda than are from here, and that is a direct result of a failing education system—not failing, an education system that is not skilling Bermudians up to take those lucrative jobs. So, our Bermudian children are watching people who look like us, persons who are coming from CARICOM countries, look like us but are not Bermudian, taking up jobs in the civil service, in the banks, service. We even have persons painting houses who are not Bermudian because it is said . . . And it has been accepted by virtue of the fact that immigration work permits have been granted for those job categories. So, it is not that these people are taking—

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Jason Hayward: I believe that the Member is misleading the House. If you look at Bermuda's work permit policy, painters is a closed and restricted job category.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Member.

Mr. Robert King: On paper, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can attest to what I have seen at a condominium complex and other places where—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: Well, they were working for a business with the label on the side. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Yes. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: No, no, no. I will take that aboard, and I will get that information. You know, the vehicle was in excellent working order and all, and all the hubcaps and everything looked legit. But [you] cannot judge a book by its cover, so I will do my due diligence.

So, we have an Education Authority whose purpose it is to ensure that our educational system is meeting the needs of our community.

We have . . . we have consulted. And I was on the Zoom call with the Minister the other day, and it was helpful. And at the same time, we know that there . . . This has to be done properly. And I will use the example of absentee voting, where my former colleagues on the Opposition put forth a Bill for absentee voting. And it was said we [have] got to make sure that this is done right because of the importance of this Bill. And I would suggest that if we are looking at priorities and we were to choose one thing that is fundamentally the most important thing for this Island, especially for working families, Black Bermudian families, families who are struggling on this Island, it would be education.

So, the question I have fundamentally is this: Why is there a reluctance to discuss the amendments in a nonpartisan manner, the same way that we have got joint select committees where we are working together for the common good? Why don't we use this as an opportunity, both sides of the House doing things differently, being courageous, and saying for once: *We are going to work together for the sake of our children's future.* And that we might—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: What side am I on? That is a great question.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: For the kids, for the children in this country. And that is why I stand as an Independent. Thank you there, Minister Hayward. I am here for the children and the people of this community, and I want what is best for them.

We need to do this properly. You have set the example, and you have set the template in terms of . . . We have to make the decisions with all available information. And that is why you did not support absentee voting. Absentee voting is for people who are not here. You want to get the . . . Well, I can see that you are furrowing your brow. We want to make sure that it is done properly.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order. I think . . . I believe the Member is misleading the House when he said we did not support absentee balloting. This Government is on record to say that we do support absentee balloting for students. If he is referring to the Act that was brought by the Opposition, he is actually proving our point. The Act was brought with no consultation with this side, no consultation with the Parliamentary Registrar, no consultation with anyone.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Minister is misleading the House. There was consultation done prior to that Bill being brought to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: With the Parliamentary Registrar, the public. And also, we had a meeting.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, Madam, again, misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The point of order is that the Member is misleading the House because we had spoken to the Parliamentary Registrar, and one of the first questions I asked was: *Has the One Bermuda Alliance bought this Bill to you?* And she said no.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

So, let me just say this on that point. So, the intelligence from either side is what it is, and so we will leave that there because you said you spoke. He said he spoke with the Parliamentary Registrar. So, we are not going to solve that particular issue here. We just need to accept that both sides did that.

Member, continue.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Madam Deputy [Speaker].

The point that I am making without splitting hairs is that it was felt that the . . . Yes, yes, no worries. It was felt (and we thoroughly support the position) that it was a Bill of monumental importance, and it needed to be done correctly. And we wanted to get it done quicker, and we conceded that more time needed to be taken for absentee voting. So, we are not in disagreement. Like I said, [I am] not going to split hairs. The fact is we are talking about something that is going to impact this Island generationally.

From the Government's own statistics, you see that international business and jobs . . . and we can also look at rentals, and we can also look at real estate [are] being impacted by the fruits of international business. And at the same time there, the disparity of Bermudians to international business enjoying equality in employment and opportunity is being eroded by the fact that the educational system is not preparing our children to be competitive.

So, what I am suggesting is that everything that we do has to be with that in mind. We have to look to the US, to Canada, to Barbados, to the UK, [and] other jurisdictions that have shown us in accordance with best practice what works. We should not adopt an approach of *I trust* and *I believe* and *I think* and use the example of a teacher laying on the ground playing with blocks, and then when the teacher takes out an iPad all the kids come towards the teacher. And the teacher already knows this. So, it is a bad example. What we need to do is the best for our children. We already know what works.

I already talked about the representation on the Education Authority. The Department of Corrections as it currently operates is not providing programmes that

are necessary for persons to be successfully released. Having a seat at the table on the Education Authority will ensure that there is proper representation to make sure that the Government can fulfil its mandate for rehabilitation, reintegration, and making Bermuda a much safer place for all of us.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22 *[sic]*.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Twenty-three.

The Deputy Speaker: Twenty-three. Thank you, Member.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to contribute to the debate relating to the Education Authority Bill 2026 wherein the Government has put forward a position to create an Education Authority for the purposes of supporting education in Bermuda. But I rise with a specific point to make. As part of a team who has considered this matter, we have a number of different points to submit to the House, and I will reiterate some of the points previously submitted whilst contributing my own.

The one which I will speak to specifically is the Bermuda Monetary Authority being used as the foundation of the Education Authority Bill [2026]. Madam Deputy [Speaker], although an admirable institution unto itself, it does not come without its problems. And most especially it has a very, very different purpose than that of a common or a regular Authority. Most especially I raise the point that the Bermuda Monetary Authority is equipped and built for the purposes of regulating services that are provided, whereas the Education Authority is interested in the provision of services.

This may seem a fairly minor technical point, but what I can assure you is that structure matters. In my day job, I work on corporate governance matters for institutions across Bermuda. And one of the things that we almost always see as a failure—a cataclysmic failure winding up in civil litigation—is ill intent or a design flaw that leads to conflict. I believe, in fact, the Government is dealing with that right now in their own political party.

Right now what we are looking at is the point of the Bermuda Monetary Authority is not just outlined in the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act, but it is substantively designed, built, and operative through other regulatory Acts, such as the Investment Business Act 2003, the Proceeds of Crime Regulations (Supervision and Enforcement) Act dealing with the supervision of AML, as well as the Insurance Act, which deals with everything from licensing and authorisation to enforcement matters, regulatory filings, et cetera. So, this is a radically different animal.

And the animal that is the Bermuda Monetary Authority was built over some number of years and is really a consolidated version of something that has evolved. Indeed, when it originally took its original form, it was nothing like it is today.

I raise that because when you have a design or when you base a design on something that is as specific as a consolidated financial services regulator—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order. I believe the Member is inadvertently misleading the House. I know he was not here to hear the brief, but nothing in my brief said that we are designing the Education Authority around the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act. That was a fact. And, in fact, in my brief I specifically said that the Education [Authority] Act is not the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act, and it should not be looked at like that.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Member.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you. I thank the Minister for the clarification. I was in fact listening in, and the basis . . . And one of the disadvantages of our form of debate is that we cannot just easily look up what a person said before until the Hansard is released. But I am certain, and I would stand to be corrected if he did not say he is basing this Bill off of the BMA, not designed around or any other kind of nomenclature.

To that end, I wanted to further specify why this is . . . why it is an ill-fitting use. And by the way, Madam Deputy [Speaker], I will go into other tools that I used to evaluate the Education Authority Bill including the International Standards [Organization] [ISO] 37000 on governance of organizations and International Standard Organization Code 21001 relating to educational management systems.

But before I go on to those, I just want to reiterate a couple of points relating to the differences between the BMA and this Authority and why the design is ill-fitting for its purpose. Most specifically, the Education Authority Bill is going to be judged on its educational outcomes, and that is actually quite key because the BMA actually does not have any such performance expectations as a financial services regulator. And therefore its corporate governance structure is designed for a very different purpose.

Equally the financing of the BMA is very unique, financed through fee structures, licensing,

et cetera, and penalties, whereas the financing here of the Education Authority will be through an approved budgetary process, which my colleagues and I will be discussing at length later on.

I say all that to say that the BMA is, yes, a success. And it is a success in governance. But just because it is a success in governance of financial regulation, it does not mean it will be a success in the governance of educational management systems.

A great example of that would be the consultation process that we see in the Education Authority Bill wherein . . . and I will not go into the specific clauses . . . but wherein there are a number of clauses dealing with the engagement with parents and students, staff, unions, school leaders and other stakeholders as well as preserving aided school independence and existing rights. And that is to be commended on the part of the Government.

Now, what it does not do, though, is resolve the issue of how school discretion, central standards, staffing influence, support, and disagreement will all work together. Arguably, the Minister will say that this will be developed or cultivated and published in Phase 2, or stage two, and to that point I would say that really these are matters that you want to attend to at the design of the organisation not one as you move into operationalising an organisation.

Madam Deputy Chair *[sic]*, I spoke . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, I apologise. I was just speaking to the purpose of the Education Authority Bill or the Education Authority and its Bill. I will speak right now to the authorities associated with this. There is some confusion that can arise between the dual purpose of this Bill because it actually does two different things. One is it establishes the Education Authority, but it also sets out a path by which to transition from the Department of Education into the Education Authority. Those are two separate, two very separate projects that are enshrined in, effectively, one Bill. And when you try to do two things with one tool you will find yourself ill-equipped to do both.

I bring this up because there are some structural issues that I wish to bring to the Minister's attention. I am sure, by the way, that a number of these have been forwarded to the Opposition Leader, and if the consultation offers unfold, well, I would imagine that we would be sharing that information with him if he seeks it out. Obviously, we have generated a number of spreadsheets in our analysis and that is not something you can just stand up and read out.

To that point I do think that we do have a number of structural issues with this Bill relating to describing the committee's objective as advice. This is a transitional committee, but it does not clarify whether or not the board, which will be accountable for that advice and the performance of that advice, whether they can reject that advice if it is ill-fitting for their purposes to which they are going to be held accountable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, speaking about leadership, my Opposition Leader had already spoken to the point that this is a very cautious and difficult topic because the Minister will be the first person to make the appointments. And the Minister might be interested to know that the Opposition Leader has actually made the point, somewhat in his defence, of just how difficult that would be and how much will hinge on that. I would add further that what we are not seeing right now is the role-specific process relating to this. We do have the Schedule that outlines that it will happen, but there are a lot of unanswered questions about the capacities. I believe that the current framework says that the first CEO will have to have appropriate skills. But what we are not seeing is what the appropriate skills for that person are.

There are complications relating to the governance of the board. For example, as it stands right now, the board permits a person to functionally withdraw where they are conflicted and yet remain within that meeting and therefore to maintain a quorum. So, it is actually quite ironic that out of a board of nine, it is very conceivable that any two people, given the low quorum number, could wind up making a decision binding millions of dollars and binding our students and schools in ways that one of those persons would be conflicted in.

I make points on the independence of this organisation, this Education Authority, because right now we do have a financial mechanism where we have an approved budget, and that is set out by the Government. But what we are having a problem with right now is, how does the board, when they make a policy change or a decision change or a direction change . . . how are they independent if they have to basically apply to the Government to justify that change?

I think that also relates to the ministerial directions where, as it stands right now, those are not going to be published by default. I take the point that the Minister has brought amendments (which I have had occasion to look through very briefly) where the board gets to decide what information may be published, what information, documents, [and] reports may be published, as it considers appropriate. I disagree with that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that is for Parliament to decide what information is most relevant for the decision-making of this body as well as the Cabinet and informing the public of Bermuda.

Moving on, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the areas that I think we will require some further discussion or elucidation from the Minister relates to the workforce. Specifically, right now there is a lot left out of this Bill relating to allocation of recruitment duties, deployment, appraisal, professional support, discipline, and review. Those are matters that are actually quite significant, and any clarity that he can provide on how that intends to work and function under a new Authority would help to assure everyone that those roles will be taken with a degree of seriousness and that we can anticipate what we are going to see out of that.

Moving on, I follow up the Honourable Opposition Leader's point on some of the issues relating to maintenance, repair, capital planning, [and] management. One of the things that we do not have in front of us that is going to be key to the success of the Education Authority will be the service level agreements or management agreements or outsourcing agreements, however they are so-called, that will set up the relationship between the Education Authority and the other parts of government, most especially the Department of Works and Engineering, Department of Parks, Ministry of Health, et cetera.

The reason that is key is because when we draft service level agreements for the purposes of financial regulation and those are inspected by the Bermuda Monetary Authority, they include a number of performance expectations, redundancies, dependencies, what to do in certain circumstances such as backlogs and service standards, [and] escalation where breaches occur. And this is more than just an academic issue because as of 4 September, we did see that Elliott Primary's installed air conditioning system could not operate as intended. We also saw reported that there are 47 health and safety priorities still open with 32 in progress. So, this is not going to be a case of easily porting over a set of obligations unto a new Authority when we clearly see deficiencies in those obligations as they are already being performed.

Moving on to capacity, and this relates to the Opposition Leader's point relating to screening students for identified needs as well as . . . I believe Member Robinson had mentioned the same thing. In fact, I think someone on the Government side mentioned it. As it stands right now, we do have a gap. And the question is: How do we identify the responsibility for assessment and clinical judgment, treatment, educational adjustments, [and] waiting times? These are all things that are currently an issue, and just like the maintenance, if we were to port it over exactly as it is to the Education Authority, we would functionally be setting up the Education Authority for failure because they would then be functionally liable for the mistakes that were already happening prior to their creation.

Speaking to accountability (and this one is obviously quite key), the Honourable Opposition Leader had mentioned one of the parts of setting up an Authority with such a high-performance standard who is involved in the provision of service, in this case education, educational outcomes. Who watches the watcher? In which case, what is the objective assessment of the Authority's own educational management? How do we know when they are going wrong? How do we know when they are missing objectives, baselines, and service deliverables? And how do we remediate that?

As it stands right now, we are not seeing that outlined. And again, that may be something coming in stage two. But when you are designing a house, you start with the foundation, and you really want to make sure you get that piece right. I think by us not having an objective assessment of the Education Authority, it leaves a gap relating to management of that Authority.

One of the other issues that we have to address, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the issue of complaints, complaints coming from parents and other stakeholders. As it stands right now, there do exist within this framework a number of provisions which I do support. But one of the things that I am not seeing here is when things go wrong, when parents get upset . . . How is it that they are going to be able to make a complaint? How are they going to be able to bring a worthy and merit-worthy appeal? What is the legal review? These are all mechanisms that are realities for parents as they are trying to navigate making the best decisions for their students and their children.

One of the issues, for example, that I discovered is in July 2026, well, dated 27 May, where it was found that the Ministry of Education headquarters missed a six-week public access to information internal review deadline in scholarship records. The reason I bring that up is because no system is perfect, and there needs to be a way to resolve issues as they arise, especially as it relates to provision of service. And in this case, when the Education Authority fails and it faces a complaint, who is actually going to learn from that and adjust?

One of the areas that we have already touched on, but I want to reiterate, is transparency. I think that the Board deciding that they are the ones that decide what information gets published is the wrong way to go. The Bill rightly includes quarterly outcome reports. It includes ministerial direction, but insofar as this Bill is concerned, these things can go into a black hole and never be seen in the light of day. And in this case, transparency would not be well served.

The decision of the Board obviously is not constituted as yet, has not been made. But one thing I would definitely say is leaving it to a group of people when it is this Parliament who is putting this Education Authority into action is in effect kicking a can down the road for others to solve.

With that being said, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your time. I hope the Honourable Minister is able to remediate some of these issues that, in our experience in the private sector, we see leading to civil action lawsuits and the like. And we will, of course, contribute in Committee to the specific clauses.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member from constituency 26, the Government Whip. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will not be long, but I do have something to add.

Let me start by saying, unlike a previous speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not have 15 years of teacher training or the experience of teaching in the classroom. Neither am I an expert in education. But I will tell you what I am. I have had 18-plus years of parenting three children.

An Hon. Member: And grandchildren.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: And now have grandchildren who I am really standing on my feet to support this evening. And I have helped to bring my kids through public education. So, I support public education. With the assistance, of course, of lady Sheila Tyrrell, our children are given the basics at home.

And I am speaking for, I think, a lot of other parents as well today because we chat, of course. And we have given them the basics to enable them to do well in our public education system. So, that is a point that I really want to make as well, that there is some responsibility on parents. And I am going to stand up, as I said, and represent parents who I know do take the time to sit with their children after school or whatever with homework or attending PTAs, actually being on PTA boards. We have had that experience through our kids from primary school right up. And I can attest that I believe that if that is something that parents would attest to do, we would have a lot less to talk about here today about having an Education Authority.

But having led with that intro, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, I say I stand to speak to this Bill, support it, and fully support the Minister in the efforts that he is attempting to do. Yes, we do have some amendments because nothing is perfect. And I think everyone on both sides understands that. You do make amendments to Bills. We do it all the time. And I was a little surprised that we had about a 10- to 20-minute back and forth about amendments. We know how it is done. They are laid here. And they sometimes come at the very last minute. So, to take umbrage that: *Oh, you have just gotten the amendments today.* Well, that is what happens. It normally happens.

I certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, wish to highlight some of the positives of this Bill. And I think there have been many. Some have already been stated by speakers on my side and speakers on the other side. They have their "buts" about things. I am going to try and highlight some of those things that I think are positive. Even though I came here today expecting to hear comments like from the other side: *Oh, we support the Bill, but does it cover this? Does it cover that?* So, I am not really surprised because they normally give the impression, the Opposition do give the impression, that we do not know what we are doing. We take too long. We spend money. We do not know how to manage—those sorts of things. So, I am not surprised at some of the things that I am hearing, despite the fact that they say they support the Education Authority.

So, you know, one of the things that one of the Members did mention [was], we talked about guardrails. And I think the Minister has put guardrails in place, certainly with some of these amendments as well.

So, some of the things that I really . . . If I could refer to my notes, Madam Deputy Speaker . . . First of all, the Bill highlights that the students are the centre of all this. It is the students we are talking about. We definitely . . . Someone has already said we all agree that we want our children to benefit from public education. So, I think the Bill, in one of its early statements, does give the impression, certainly states, that students are at the centre of this entire Bill. The Board will be filled with professionals, professional people, not education people, if I understand [it] in the strict sense of the word, but people who are professionals in their fields, who will probably bring a different set of things to think about in the education because we all have our different positive things. So, I think having a board of professionals, I certainly think, is a good idea.

The Bill speaks to having public meetings and annual reports. So, again, there is consultation with the public as to how things are going on during this first period. I think it is understood that there should not be political appointments on this, and I certainly support that to the fullest. I think the Minister understands the reason why we should go that direction without having political appointments. And this Board having to be funded, of course, by Government does mean that we have some input in terms of the practicalities of doing things. So, there is some responsibility on both sides. So, it is the Board itself, yes, that will govern the affairs of education, and I think that is exactly what we are definitely looking at.

The Minister does have some latitude in terms of changes to the Board, which again I think is a good thing as well. So, again, I am trying to point out a lot of the positives that have gone into this Bill, and I think that if we always just concentrate on the negatives all the time, which, you know, were in the past, I do not think it does as well going forward. So, I am certainly a full supporter of this Bill.

Let me just check my notes just to make sure that I have covered all the points that I want to before I sit down.

I think one of the things that I do like is that each phase of this Bill is actually to be brought back here to be debated in Parliament. So, everyone will have an opportunity to bring their experiences of the Bill entrained back here, and we will have this discussion. It is not . . . We are not going to be able to get it all perfect at one time. So, again, there is another opportunity, if I could use the term, [of] getting a bite at the cherry for everyone.

Again, I certainly, you know, I am surprised that, you know, the Opposition Member talked about guardrails. But I think the safeguards are there to get this going in the right direction. So, let me end by saying that I fully support the Bill. I fully support the Minister

and his technical people in putting this together. But one of the last things I want to say is that I think we have some very dedicated teachers in the system, and with the cooperation of parenting and teachers I think we are going to see some success in the Education Authority.

And I thank you for the time, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members?

I recognise the Member from constituency 1. Member, you have the floor.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker and the listening audience.

I thought I would add my voice to this debate here this evening because—

[Crosstalk]

Mrs. Renee Ming: —as a proud representative of the absolute best constituency, by virtue of the fact that it is number 1. This is—

An Hon. Member: What?

Mrs. Renee Ming: You are not number 1.

This is something that I get on my doorsteps a lot. And I do not have to just get it on doorsteps. I can be stopped just about anywhere. And education is a huge concern for parents. And I do not actually blame them because if we want our children . . . I mean, most of us want our children to do and be better than us. And that has to start from a solid and decent education.

Over the past five, six, seven years, I do not think I have talked to too many who have a lot of trust and confidence in the current system as what we have in front of us now. And although I think that they are trying to be as patient as they can with us, there is not a lot of time, when it comes down to educating children, to get it right.

I have seen the other side of this, Madam Deputy Speaker, as well, especially as it relates to children who just kind of get themselves out of the system. And it could be for various reasons. There are all sorts of traumas that our children deal with. There could be reading or anything like . . . just some type of issue, and then eventually they lose that drive for their own educational paths. And so, we know what the other side of that looks like because we know what we have dealt with on their sides. And so, I do believe that it is time for something, and that we just cannot go on in the same fashion that we have been going on all this time.

Now, if you ask me: *Do I believe that the Education Authority is the answer?* That still remains to be seen for me. I did take the opportunity to listen to the Minister's consult that he had with us, and I appreciate that he did that. [It] did not answer all of my questions, Madam Deputy Speaker. But some of them were [answered].

I think that there are definitely questions on my side in terms of independence, and I know that there has been a lot of discussion about [how] education needs to come out of politics. If that is going to help make it better for the children, then so be it. I say go for it because our children have suffered long enough.

I took the time over the last . . . as I prepared, to just kind of read what the newspapers say about education. And I have the articles here, and it says: "BUT: teachers must be at the centre of reform decisions." [Also:] "Charity head: the public should have a say on Education Authority." And if you want to know, these are from *The Royal Gazette*.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for that. That is important.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Yes. *The Royal Gazette*, all of them. "Give parents a real voice in public education." "Survey shows support for education reform and education authority." And then this week, we saw "Declining Cambridge results predate pandemic and reform." So, we know that we have had an issue for some time, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, there are so many things that go through your mind when you start to talk about education. Right? And I do feel for parents because I know I have sat in homes with constituents who are doing what they believe was the best thing, and they are leveraging any bit of equity in their homes to be able to come up with what they believe is the best thing, private school fees. And we have had discussions about that because they had thought that that equity and that ability to borrow and leverage against the home would happen for university. They did not dream that they would have to start it at a primary level. And I do . . . I feel for them when they feel that that is the only option.

As a parent myself, I have three children. [They are] adults now but [they] did start in the public school system. I myself am a proud public school system person. So, I know that it can work. I do not even think that we have a situation where parents are not engaged and involved because my parents . . . And I do not just talk to my St. George's parents. I go all over the place, and I am always talking. And these parents are concerned. You have one shot sometimes to get your children educated—one shot. And if we do not get that right, we can assume many other problems, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some might feel that this is the do all end all, and it is going to be great and wonderful and stuff. I still have concerns. But that is me. In my discussions though, what I realised with parents, educators, administrators . . . I have even spoken to custodians at schools because they are part of a children's life cycle as well. And they too have concerns.

One of the questions that I did ask during the call, when I was on there, was about consultation. And I note that the Minister said we have had hundreds of hours of consultation on this. And the concern for me . . . And it could be even perceived as a question was . . . I know that we had hundreds of hours of this. We were talking about reform. And so now we are talking about Education Authority. And so, I am trying to understand how this is merging from reform into Authority. I mean, I am still very open to the opportunities that an Authority offers, but I am also well aware that there were many discussions under the fact that we were discussing reform.

And I will say this here. And I will be very . . . I am very calm in any discussion on education as it relates to our children, even if I feel passionate about it because I worked for some years with Dame Jennifer Smith. And one of the things that she was very vociferous about in terms of education was when we discuss or debate education, it should never be in a connotation that it is so negative. Because she would not . . . She always used to say*, I do not want children who can read the newspaper and stuff [to] read all of this negativity.* Right? She was very, very . . . she was . . . That was a very strong belief of hers. And so, I would even keep myself on a very calm and level vein even in this debate, although there are times [that] I feel very passionate about our education structure, system, and issues.

I say that about the consultation part of it because I believe that that is always important. And clearly, the unions believe that it is important. And in discussions with parents, they think it is important. I think there is more discussion needed as it relates to an Education Authority. There were seen to be lots of parents who were unsure of what the Authority would actually do. And even in terms of educators who were going to be expected to perform and work under the Authority, there was lots of confusion as well. And whilst I can accept that at this stage, not everyone, and maybe even the Minister, may not have all of the answers, to bring up people along with you is where you will see success. If we proceed without ensuring that parents, educators, community—all stakeholders—have an understanding of what this means and what the expectations will be, it will not be successful. Whenever we bring legislation and we do not bring the people with us, it always seems to not be as successful as it could be because there is no such thing as too much consultation. Even if you are tired and the people may just be starting to listen. And so, I would encourage the Ministry, the Minister, to get back out and do road shows as it relates to this.

One of the . . . And I will start just with some of the items that were raised to me and how I think that we could do better in some spaces. One of them is that the Board reports . . . in accordance with the legislation it was saying that the Board would report monthly to the Minister but periodically to us in this space. And I do have a problem with that because given the fact that we are in very, very, very serious times, if the Minister is being reported to on a monthly basis, then a defined period should say when it comes here to this House of Assembly so that there is some accountability in how we hear about this and also provide feedback on it.

If I am going to be extremely honest, we are in a very . . . We are not in the best way. We are not in the best way at all. And there is an expectation that we now need to do better. It has been nine years, and we have got to do better. I do not want to say that we failed our children, but we have not done the best that we could by our children. And we that sit in this House, we do not get to walk away scot-free. So, I would ask that even if legislatively that is not there, there should be a commitment that if the Minister is being updated monthly then this House needs to be more than "periodically" updated, in my opinion. There is a report that is going to be expected in 18 months. And I think that we would all be looking forward to that, but periodic updates before that would be good.

I also note that the legislation says that there will be an expectation for there to be zone meetings annually. We are well beyond the annual stage if we are going to sit here and be honest. And so, just as I am saying that we should have more frequent meetings for us who sit here in the Legislature, then the public needs to be engaged in the same way. I would hate to think that we go for a whole year before we seek any type of feedback, whether it be suggestion, comment, or criticism from our parents and from the public.

There are definitely some current concerns in what an educational restructure even looks like. Right? Because there are some persons who are worried about what their jobs will look like or if they will even have a job. And I think that that, too, will require some level of consultation as we move on.

We have spoken a lot about the autonomy of an Education Authority. And I just ask for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am just going to read something, but it is just my notes. The Ministers are going to appoint the first chairman, the CEO, and the initial Board. The Board members later on are appointed by the Minister's recommendation. [There] still seems to be a lot of intervention and hands in there by the Minister. And I just want that to be considered because we keep saying that we want to take the politics out of it, and we want it to be autonomous, and things like that.

But just thinking in terms of independence, (right?) if the . . . I do not know. If the Minister is appointing these persons, then how . . . Yes, you are going to have to start somewhere. But it needs to be probably better explained, maybe, to the public on where that autonomy lies because if you start to go through the legislation, you see lots of points that say, "and the Minister," "and the Minister," "and the Minister," and they did this under the Minister. And so, if you are not sure, then it would still appear that the Minister has a hand in it, and a heavy hand at that.

I am concerned about Bermudianisation. I know in my call we said that we want best applicants. But I would hope that at some point Bermudians would, number one, be considered. And if not, then we go to do that. Because there is a cultural side of education as well as the academic side, Madam Deputy [Speaker]. But there is also a cultural side as well.

The criteria in terms of who can and cannot sit on the Board did leave me with some questions as well because it was very clear that [it] said, I believe, if you are a serving teacher or if you are on another board or whatever, if you are a maintained or aided school . . . And if I am not naming all of them, I am just giving you what I can remember right now. Is that one . . . Why . . . If we could get some explanation on why we thought that that was the best route. Because I would hate to also think that there is someone who can really help the Board, who has a level of expertise, and can bring this education system where it needs to be and we would overlook them because they sit somewhere else. If they have got the capacity, then why not?

I do not subscribe to the philosophy of just getting on with it because we have been just getting on with it for some time now. And it is time that we actually prioritise, we engage, and we connect with our community in terms of education. We deserve, Bermudians deserve, our people deserve, to be able to have a decent education, to be able to send our children to school and be confident that they are going to do the best that they can and that we are going to be able to provide them with the best that we have.

One of the other things I wanted to understand was the funding. So, yes, we understand that the funding will come from the Government, per se. But how will the Education Authority be responsible for allocating any of the funds? I wasn't quite sure how that was written in the actual document.

And then, I guess, I mean, all of us are going to assume that if the Authority is in place, we will see improvement. But what happens if the student, if the outcomes that we get are not improved? So, who is the overseer of the Authority? And how would they be held to account during this time? I guess it would be some form of evaluation of the Education Authority, and I look forward to hearing about that.

I think that might be all my notes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. We owe it to our children. We owe it to the families. We owe it to Bermuda. Because what we don't want is to have a whole cohort of children who cannot find jobs here because they may not have the educational requirements. And we owe it to our children to be able to have a system that works for them, that benefits them and actually produces students to the best of their abilities.

So, Madam Deputy [Speaker], on that note, I will sit.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Are there any other presidents who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise . . . You wish to speak to this Bill, Member from constituency 2?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, ma'am.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. You have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Education Authority Bill, I am obliged that the Minister responsible for Tourism [and Transport], Culture [and Sport], I believe, did an excellent job in his presentation. And it's not lost on me that he is a former educator. Education is his trade, and I always said that your trade is where you learn that from which you base what you carry through life.

I feel it is necessary to just put some context into the matter. I know the Opposition Leader was referring to the years that he had seen education. But I guess, having been one who ran in 1983 at age 25, I've been around long enough to know that there was once, even in the 1990s, an article that called being an Education Minister *the graveyard of ministries*. And it was well known.

I feel obligated to share some of those persons who have been part of that graveyard. The very first Education Minister would have been my late cousin, Dr. Stanley Ratteray, and that was probably during the time of representative government. He didn't lose his seat; he was in the Upper Chamber. Affectionately known as "Honeybee Vesey" [who] was a former Education Minister. Bill Cox would have been an Education Minister. The late Gloria [Juanita] McPhee was an Education Minister.

One near and dear to my heart in 1983 was Dr. George Thomas, who had me start an initiative in 1983 going to schools. People wonder why I would go to Dalton E. Tucker [Primary] school today. It is because, in 1983, the Minister of Education, a golfer at Castle Harbour and a compassionate man, and his brother, Austin Thomas, sat on opposite sides of the aisle but were no less caring about the community. And in fact, both of them were very spiritual. He used to have a 6:45 morning devotional programme that showed people how much devotion meant to him as well.

And I started going to Francis Patton School in 1983. Not lost on me that I learned golf because of someone who also attended Francis Patton School and came from my community, the late Walter Eugene King, who, although he was not an Education Minister, was elected for the Progressive Labour Party in 1976.

My cousin, Gerald Simons, was probably one of the longest-serving Education Ministers from 1986 to 1993. Someone who came from my same Southampton community. Dr. [Clarence] Tessi Terceira was an Education Minister.

The article that I referred to was an article about Jerome Dill, who would have lost his seat, but he became an Education Minister as well.

And also, you had Dame Jennifer Smith. You had my school teacher from [The] Berkeley [Institute], Kenneth Howard Randolph Horton, former Speaker of the House, who was also a former Education Minister.

And I'm sure . . . here's another one, I believe, former Member, [Dr.] Neletha "Honey" [Butterfield] would have been an Education Minister. And I'm being told that's true.

And also, former Premier Ms. [Paula] Cox was a former Education Minister as well. So, there have been a lot of Education Ministers over time. And I believe the longest serving Education Minister is the Honourable Diallo Rabain.

And I'm told that I missed out one.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Minister Wilson, for two months.

An Hon. Member: Ever so briefly.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Ever so briefly.

An Hon. Member: But it was a strong two months.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But you know, I want to just, I just feel compelled to share some very poignant moments in education that have stuck with people for a long time. What you do today impacts somebody 20 years from now more than it will impact people tomorrow.

So, I put that into context. I stick a pin in that to say this is what my concern is for the here-and-now children who are another generation are going to experience change. We have to come up with something that ensures what needs to be done to make sure they don't fall through the cracks happens tomorrow. It's incumbent upon us to make them front and centre.

As I stick a pin into some of those historical events. And I say that very meaningfully, because I believe one opportunity that we have missed over the years as we have gravitated towards taking that intellectual approach to education is to overlook the significance, and I've been an advocate of sports academies, arts academies, trade schools.

And I'll dovetail into one of my most historic moments in education, the closing of the Technical Institute. The impact lingers today, as we cannot find Bermudian tradespeople.

And I grew up in an era when Bermudian trade persons were the ones training us. Coming home from university, could get a job at golf, but there weren't many tourists in Bermuda during the Christmas season, so where would I go? Even back then during the heyday, there weren't many tourists in Bermuda during Christmas month. But I could get a job on a construction site; I could learn a little bit about turning some mortar, passing some blocks, and working with dawgs and those boys on those sites. Oh yes. At Universal Construction, up and down Bermuda's construction sites. You can learn a little electrical trade as well; you can learn some plumbing as well from Bermudians. And out of the Technical Institute came many Bermudian businesspersons.

And a precursor to the . . . before the Technical Institute, when you talk about educating Bermudians, was the Dockyard Apprentices . . . the Dockyard Apprentices. I'll never forget, going to get my haircut up there. I'm not that familiar with Somerset like I once was. I mean, there was a "blue wave" that ran through the Americas; I don't know what happened. It was supposed to run through Bermuda too in August and July, when the Blue was supposed to bring the Cup to us, but it didn't. I'm happy that the Blue went there.

An Hon. Member: It's about education.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, oh, yes, it is all about education. It's all about education, about the significance of the Technical Institute and the impact on Bermuda because of its closure, which didn't happen during the Progressive Labour Party's tenure.

And that also dovetailed with Bermuda shifting gears, shifting gears towards international business. And so, you had an industry, that Bermudians were being prepared for, eliminated, shifting gears to an industry that catered more to Black women in this country. And Black men have always been marginalised in Bermuda, no matter what, and around the world, but it's been true. And as a consequence, decisions, as I've always said, get made high and lofty, and they don't trickle down.

So, if I am to advise the longest-serving Education Minister about how I believe an Authority which has the opportunity, I would urge him to do two things. I would urge him to talk to his colleague who spoke on this, who has had some experience presiding over an Authority and did a good job navigating it through to find out how you can do that, because you can't lose sight that you need some Government input, no matter who the Government is, when you commit millions of government dollars. And look, you are going to say: *Oh, just turn it over to the private sector.* The private sector caused the recessions that have happened in this world. They were not caused by . . . and I want to make sure that we have . . . there's a psychological impact that needs to go into education. There's a social impact. You just don't have to be the brightest to be someone who knows what it takes to educate.

I'm going to declare my interest. I educate people in my trade. And I'm good at it. I got people calling me from around the world [about] my ability to inspire . . . inspiration, motivation, being prepared to tell a person what time it is and understand their mind-set and

capacity to take it in. And know when you got to bring them along and know when you got to hold it or fold it.

That's a skill set that I hope is incorporated into what we do going forward. Because the one thing, going back to the 1960s, is that those who have suffered most throughout the 55 to 70 years that I've been around to experience in public education have been the great unwashed, the common man. That is who we have got to make sure that we set this for. Because you can only have so many doctors in Bermuda. You can only have so many lawyers in Bermuda. You can only have so many accountants in Bermuda. You can only have so many people working in offices. But when you have a country that can't look within itself to find those persons to repair your toilet, that can come in there and repair your electrical [system], that can come there and build your country, you are not looking at the social fabric and the social impact in educating people. And I just feel duty-bound to just go there.

There is another impact that has happened socially in this country. You notice that when I gave my outline of all those Education Ministers, I spoke fondly of the time I hit the name Kenneth Howard Randolph Horton. I would have spoken fondly if I was talking about English teachers. Robert Horton, great English teacher, my English teacher. There were other teachers that I could single out.

One of the things that have hurt Bermuda is the dearth of male teachers in education. And when we are setting up this next mousetrap, we need to look at the social implications of what it is going to take to inspire. And you are not talking about a lot of people in this country. You have got to have a social conscience and understand them.

And understand what it takes to inspire a person. I'm blessed to not only be able to recall the influence of a Kenneth Howard Randolph Horton or a Robert Horton on my education, but also on Lloyd James in my development, in my education, who also was an educator. He didn't educate me formally at Warwick [Secondary] because I had left there, but he educated me by playing golf and being around me in golf for years, involved in my life. But inspiring other young people through his prowess in sport and their . . . others prowess in sport.

And so, when you have an education system, a public education system, you would have heard me this morning. If you didn't, I'll reiterate it. I complimented Mr. Horan, [David] Horan, whose son plays Cup Match for the mighty St. George's, who I hope will lift the Cup in 2027.

And I see the Warwick Academy children coming up to Belmont Golf, about eight of them this last week with their golf bags in the afternoon. And it reminded me of 1976 when I used to play golf in West Palm Beach with the high school students and the junior college students that I was playing for. We had our team bags, and we had to be on the course at a certain time. We had to be respectful.

We couldn't play when the adults were playing. But we had access to some of the greatest courses in Palm Beach County and some of the greatest instructors. And they celebrate the youngsters who are their alumni who do well in life and who do well in sport, who came through their programme. They have got a . . . I . . . I have observed them having a kind of sports academy mind-set. Because you know what? When I go out to look for young talent, you let someone walk into an interview who has been involved in tennis or golf or track and so forth and played on the NCAA team and did well, they have learned some valuable and invaluable skill sets just by that exposure.

When I grew up in the Bermuda public school system, we had a competitive weekly school sports programme, and we had school teams that could beat local club teams. And clubs were looking for talent in the school system.

So, an intellectual does not get that because an intellectual might frown down on sport. They might frown down on golf until they get in the business world and they come looking for me. And then I've got to teach them, and I use their disciplines in learning their actuarial sciences or their law and then I apply it to my structure. And then I tell them how to put it into music and be creative. That is why the arts are so important. First thing that gets cut when money gets dry, you cut social programmes, and you cut the arts.

I'm glad I am not a Minister for the Arts and Sport who advocates for it, who believes in it. It is important.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: It's important. And I'm telling you this: that that needs to be incorporated in the mousetrap that we build.

I ran the second time for election in 1998 when they had dual-seat constituencies. I ran next to a gentleman who came to this country as a policeman, and at the time he was an economist. I think he studied law while he was on the police force, and at that time, when we ran together, he was the Vice Chairman of the Bank of Butterfield. I guess he lived the Bermuda dream in his life. But he used to be passionate about education as well, because he was a schoolteacher by trade. I am talking about Robert "Bob" Stewart. And Bob used to say week in and week out. I didn't agree with it. Bob used to mention . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, he was not, but he was a teacher. He wasn't . . . No, that is true. But he was a teacher, and he was an economist, and he believed, and he advocated a voucher system. Now a voucher system isn't my idea of public education because public education you have to take, as the Minister would tell you, you have to take every person in this country. The

private schools take the cream of the crop, or those who can afford to pay.

The reason why I'm mentioning the voucher system some 30 years later is for the here and now. If we can look in our school system and see some folk who need some additional help or are some talented, gifted students, I've seen them because I still go into the schools. I understand some of these social issues. I use my own money to try to support students. I'm looking at setting up a foundation to be able to provide some of those for sports. Why not use the voucher system in the public school system as a fail-safe while we are still changing the system? Don't let another one fall through the cracks. Use some of that windfall money from the corporate income tax to divert it to people. That's where I'm going.

And yes, I am not afraid to be able to take an idea from someone who might have a different philosophical view from me because there might be a time when that idea can serve our country well. And I believe that idea may be something to help us because one thing is for sure in the graveyard of Education Ministers, thankfully we've got one who's still here and I appreciate him very much. But I am here to say that we need to arm him with some ammunition to be able to focus on the children more . . . *the children more*.

If you are talking about 1,500, 2,000, 10,000, it's not a lot. Somebody will come and tell me the exact number. It's not a lot. And if you've got that corporate income tax . . . because some of those young persons in the public school system are coming into schools with some serious issues but with some talents as well. And the one thing those male teachers and female teachers of some of our eras could do is they could spot talent before the talent even knew it existed in the person. Because you know why? You know why? Because they knew who you came from.

When I was walking around Somerset Bridge and going to Glebe School, those teachers knew that I had Ratteray. I had Swan. I had Anderson. I had Burrows' blood. They knew my family. They knew what we were made of. They knew that Peter Anderson, I had some of his traits. They knew I had some of Harriet "Babe" Ratteray's traits. They knew I had some of John Anderson's traits. They knew I had some of Alden Swan's traits. They know us. And that is important when you are trying to save persons and direct them forward. You can look at a person and help them, inspire them, Madam Deputy Speaker. You would know about what I speak. You are a teacher by trade.

I say that with all sincerity that we cannot afford not to invest some of this windfall money towards identifying . . . you know, I am one who has experienced social profiling. It's not a nice thing at all. Playing professional golf in Europe in 1980, playing in the 1970s. I know what it's like. But I know you can reverse that script by getting a social profile on every child in this country. And having persons who are skilled at it. Maybe employing some of those seniors who we have in our own country. Some of those seniors who stop me on the road and say, *Boy, I wish you were still talking on a Wednesday.* Employ some of them to go out there and share some of their trade secrets.

Some of our waiters and waitresses. We have a hospitality school up at Sandys Middle School. Some of our Bermudians who you might see driving a taxi or who may have been a maître d'. You'd see them walking around the street. They were therapists. More skilled than persons with PhDs practising in the United States. That's why we had so many high repeat-factor visitors in Bermuda who would come to sit at the same table because they knew they were going to talk to somebody who could help them. That's the type of Bermudian that I want to see for the future. Use some of that talent that is in this country today who still, we still got to work at 69 and 70 and 75 because the cost of living is high. We still got to eat. So why not tap into our talents?

And I say that with all sincerity because when I put all my eggs into intellectualism, they aren't going to understand the ordinary man and the ordinary child of this country and the plight that they are coming to.

When I took those children with me up at Port Royal last week to be around the golf, one of the young men that goes to Sandys Middle School said to me, *You know, Mr. Swan, I like it up there. But $13 for my lunch is a little bit much. My mama can get me the food in the morning, but $13 for lunch.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I'm just saying. But you know, you have to be around folk to be able to understand folks. It's important. And some of us who might have the money to be able to put it there might not appreciate how that is.

So, when we build this mousetrap, when we build this structure, when we look to move it away, don't think that by doing so the private sector has all the answers. Because in economics, they are the ones that brought us the recessions; they are the ones that will bring us the next recession. And I say that with all sincerity. Because we need to make sure that we also embrace our unions as well and those persons who might be in the grassroots organisations of our grassroots organisation in Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe the history of education and the graveyard of educators have shown us that it has always been a political hot potato.

But I'm going to say this in my last minute and a half or two. And I feel obligated to say this, through it all,—

Some Hon. Members: Through it all.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —you still have the same persons as civil servants presiding over education. Through it all. *Through it all.*

And I just want to go back to the Bob Stewart voucher system. Through it all, I need the people who can best inspire around our children. I need some good social advocates around those young people. I need some programmes where you can identify what their aptitude is and what the problems are.

But I do believe, in all honesty, that we have seen a bureaucracy grow in education. And I believe we need, whilst we're in the examination period, I feel duty-bound to say that we need to look comprehensively at that as well. Because at the end of the day, that caring teacher, principal, deputy, acting principal, schoolteacher, parent, will take it out of their own pocket and provide. Because there are the ones who see the future before the future understands that they are the future. There are the ones. They are the heroes of this country: the Dalton Tuckers, the Elsie Bascomes, the Wynton Williamses. They are the ones: The Solange Saltus. They are the ones who can look at a person and see their future before they even know that there is such a thing as the future. That's where we need to put our emphasis—on them.

So, as we look, I believe we need to look comprehensively, and I believe we need to look universally. And if ever there was a time for bipartisan buy-in, you got to say it's got to be for our children.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member from constituency 9.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to start by thanking three Members of the House for their contributions to this Bill, to the debate of this Bill.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr Vance Campbell: In particular, *in particular, in particular.*

[Laughter]

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is the Opposition Leader, Minister Owen Darrell, and MP Renee Ming. And the reason for that is that the first two spoke with a great deal of passion. One outlining the Opposition's position as it comes to what we're looking for in an Authority. And I really appreciate, as another frustrated parent of a child in the public education system . . . I really appreciated the comments coming from Minister Darrell. [With] [MP] Ming, I appreciated how she sort of took the emotion out of it because I can become very emotional on this topic.

Why does education cause our emotions to rise? Education, Madam Deputy Speaker, is one of the most effective tools that we can have for closing the gap, levelling the playing field, irrespective of where we start in life. Education is critical in preparing our kids for the jobs of tomorrow, and it is critical in preparing our people for the jobs of today and tomorrow. So, I just want to thank those three for their contribution, in particular. I appreciate the contribution made by all, but those three in particular.

And today, as we debate this independent Education Authority, it is our responsibility to ensure that what we pass as a result of this Bill, what results from the passing of this Bill, genuinely creates an independent . . . and I accept that when we talk about independent, we are talking about operational independence. I accept that. That it creates a genuinely independent, professionally led, properly funded (because that is critical), and relentlessly accountable entity for improving the lives and educational outcomes of Bermuda's children.

Independence. Madam Deputy Speaker, independence cannot mean that politicians appoint key people, control the money, issue directions, and then call the organisation “autonomous.” Nor, Madam Deputy Speaker, can independence mean that an unelected Authority operates without rigorous public accountability. The proper settlement is political responsibility for policy, professional independence for operations, and uncompromising public accountability for outcomes. That is the standard, Madam Deputy Speaker, against which this Bill should be judged.

We support the destination. Our concern is whether this legislation actually gets Bermuda there.

Our Opposition Leader spoke of amendments. We have amendments brought by the Minister himself today. So, our Opposition Leader spoke of amendments. That is not to say that if the Minister were to accept those amendments, we would have arrived at perfection. That is not the case. But those are amendments that the Opposition believes, based on the responsibility that we have in the debate of this Bill, to ensure that what we create is genuinely independent, professionally led, properly funded, and relentlessly accountable for improving the lives and educational outcomes of the children of Bermuda.

It was interesting to learn, when we talk about resources, that the resources available in the public education system here in Bermuda, when compared to other jurisdictions, are much better. We are much better off. However, I am sure every one of us here in this Chamber tonight can agree that it is not where it should be.

We also heard comments from one or two of the speakers as to what happens, what actions are being taken now to change the outcomes for the children who are in the system, now, while we wait for the creation of the Education Authority. It is important that their needs are addressed. Otherwise, we could have some kids who, by the time they reach their final year in public education in Bermuda, that their entire time in the public

education system would have been disrupted by reform of some sort.

What I would like to see, Madam Deputy Speaker, is more emphasis right up front outlining the primary objective of the Authority in exercising its functions under this Bill.

It must be that its primary objective is to secure continuous improvement in educational outcomes and equitable education opportunities for every student in the public education system. A lot of the Bill that we are discussing is around structure, but we must, *we must* have it stated clearly right up front: the focus on achieving better outcomes for our kids. And when it comes to that primary objective, the Board shall have regard to the primary objective in every operational plan, budget, strategic decision, and annual report. That's how important this is, Madam Deputy Speaker. The purpose of this Education Authority is not primarily to administer education. It is to improve it. It has to be.

Does this legislation truly transfer operational authority over education from politicians to education professionals, while holding those professionals publicly accountable for results? The Bill describes an autonomous Education Authority, but the Minister retains considerable influence over its establishment, leadership, financing, and activities.

The Minister appoints the initial members of the Board, personally appoints the first chairman, personally appoints the first CEO, and is consulted on subsequent CEO appointments. Approves remuneration of the Board and Committee members after consultation with finance and approves the Authority budget jointly with the Minister of Finance. Can issue the Board general directions, receive extensive monthly and other reports, quarterly reports, and retains significant involvement throughout the transition.

None of these provisions, Madam Deputy Speaker, individually destroy independence. Collectively, however, they raise a serious question. And the question is: Are we genuinely transferring control of the education of our kids away from the Minister, or merely creating an arm's-length body over which the Minister retains substantial levers of influence?

Why is there concern over the selection of the first Board chair and first CEO? Madam Deputy Speaker, the founding chairman and CEO will establish the Authority's culture, organisational structure, relationship with government, staffing philosophy, and approach to education reform. If independence matters, independence matters most at the inception.

When it comes to the Board having regard to certain directions from the Minister, I have no problem in general with that, because the Education Authority will be receiving public funds. But there ought to be a bright and clear line between the Government's legitimate role in setting national education policy, determining overall public expenditure, proposing education legislation, establishing broad strategic objectives, and setting minimum statutory standards. And the Authority's professional role when it comes to staffing, school improvement, deployment of resources, teaching and learning support, operational management, implementation, and performance management. The legislation should make the boundary explicit. Otherwise, in future disputes can arise between a future Minister and the Board.

And this is not a question of whether we trust the current Minister. This is just putting in the safeguards so that legislation works, irrespective of when personalities change.

Again, our Opposition Leader, when he spoke, he was not striving for perfection. And given that we should be trying (taking MP Ming's lead) to remove the emotion as we make a very important decision in the history of this country.

We are not meeting until the 20th. That is my understanding, Madam Deputy Speaker, the 20th of November. We are not meeting again until then. There is a Senate meeting on the 25th; that is also my understanding, Madam Deputy Speaker. And so, we have two weeks in which I implore the Minister to make some of his valuable time available, and those who have advised him directly in the drafting of this Bill, so that we can present some of those amendments. Since we have amendments here today to consider,

I implore the Minister to take that time, take the emotion out, take the politics out, and have us sit down, both sides of the aisle, and consider a few additional amendments. Because, as I stated, our responsibility today is to ensure that what Parliament creates is genuinely independent, professionally led, properly funded, and relentlessly accountable for improving the lives and educational outcomes of Bermuda's children.

I have never been a teacher; but I am a parent. I am a parent who is frustrated. And I feel as if I have been passed around a system designed to wear me down as I fight for my son. They want me to give up. But I will not, because my son's future, his ability to function in this country, is at stake. So, outcomes are important.

Yes, this is personal. This should be personal to every single one of us. Let’s get it right. Not perfect. Let us get it right, and we have time. It is not going to delay this Bill if we take the next two weeks and improve it.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 17. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good evening, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Education is the foundation of national development. There is no doubt about that. But what we are doing today is debating an Education Authority Bill.

Most of the interventions today have been extremely emotional. Even in interventions where the tone has been moderate, there was still emotion behind what was actually articulated. Nothing is wrong with that. But we also have a responsibility to ensure that what we are doing is right. That forces us to do a diagnostic assessment of where we currently are to determine if what we're proposing is the appropriate way forward. Even as it pertains to the amendments that the Opposition are proposing,

I listened carefully to determine whether or not the amendments that were being proposed are significant enough to affect the plumbing of the House, or whether or not we are arguing about paint colour.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: I had not made up my mind whether they fell into either category. I was not trying to be offensive, so I am not sure where the chirping is coming from.

My line and length are that I didn't understand how the amendments being proposed correlate with the assessment that has actually been done to identify where the problems in our system actually lie. There has been no connection between the two. Whether a Minister selects the chairman, we have not identified that as a fundamental challenge to our system moving forward.

We all care about education, and so we agree on that. We agree that moving forward with our Authority is in our best interest. There is collective acceptance from the House on that.

The matter around education and its ability to reduce inequalities, and promote social mobility. We agree to that. We agree we need to encourage and celebrate our educators for the work that they do. With the resources that they have had to operate with. With the kids who come into the system, coming from various socioeconomic backgrounds, it creates complexity to the job that actually needs to be done.

We can do a good job as individuals who have had experiences with the system, highlighting our own individual issues and our own observations. But then connecting it to how we are aiming to do it, begins to solve that problem. Have we diagnosed what the problems with our current system are? And what are the systems? And that will give us a good measure of what needs to be done moving forward.

And the Minister of Education has referenced several reports that have all done that assessment of our education system. And those reports also have made strategic recommendations on how we move forward. As a result of that, we get to the point where we believe that an Education Authority is in the best interest of our future education system.

And we cannot understate the importance of the role that this Authority will have moving forward. But we also cannot move forward with this mind-set that we are going to discredit or undermine the ability of the Authority to carry out its functions from day one. And already that is the tone of some of the commentary that I have heard tonight.

I listened to MP Campbell, and he echoed some words that Minister Furbert actually articulated regarding us not needing to compromise progress by trying to settle for perfection. And the reality is the Minister made it abundantly clear that this is the first of several Bills pertaining to the Authority that may need to come back to this House.

And so, this is not the end all be all. There are further opportunities for greater levels of collaboration moving forward, taking suggestions, feedback, and incorporating this into the parts of the Bill that will deal with the heavier administrative changes to our system as we move forward. And part of what will influence that is the recommendations that will come from the Board that's established back to the Minister. And Parliament will then collectively decide on what we seek to move forward with in the form of a Bill in front of this House, and it will receive the appropriate level of scrutiny.

We have to be mindful that an independent Authority does not remove democratic accountability of the Government. I do not know if somebody's future vision of an Authority is that the Authority does whatever the Board of the Authority sets out to do. And if any Government has a concern with actions that are being executed, that there is no level of accountability, there is no barometer checks.

We did not say that we were privatising our education system. We said we were transitioning into an Authority. An Authority that will be funded by public finances. And anything funded with public finances should come with a certain level of accountability. Also, an ability to ensure that the outcomes that we collectively desire are being met. And so, I do not view what is in front of us today as the Minister having a heavy hand in the future decision-making of what happens with our education system.

I think by bringing this Bill, the Minister is actually saying that he wants to empower a group of professional individuals to guide the direction of our system moving forward. If the Minister wanted to continue to guide the direction of our system, then he would not have brought this Bill before us today. Why go through the challenge of creating an entire Authority to continue with the status quo? And so, we must be responsible with our commentary on this particular matter.

The Minister has made it abundantly clear that he wants to ensure that there is a level of expertise guiding the pathway forward for education in Bermuda. Whether it be the Hopkins Report, the reports produced by Bermuda First, or reports from Learning First, they

have all collectively contributed to informing the decision that we are making today.

We recognise that we do not want the political cycles to have impact and influence on our education system the way it currently is. And so, this brings a level of governance continuity to our education system as well.

I heard very little about the positives of this Bill in the dialogue today. But the Authority will allow us to transition into long-term planning and sustainable implementation. The key to positive outcomes will be the institutional stability that the Board would actually provide.

We recognise that there are numerous stakeholders in our community that have a vested interest. Teachers, parents, students, employers all have a vested interest. And I agree with the commentary that they should have a say. But this Bill does not articulate that they will be excluded from the processes moving forward.

The Union will always have an important role to play through the lens of being the representatives of the workers who have to work within our system.

Parents have a vested interest and must be on the front line, and not just helping to inform changes that need to be made, but also, it needs to be clear to the parents as well the future direction of our system. Because they also need to understand what we are doing will impact the lives of their kids in a positive manner. But we also can have our kids operating with a mindset that they are being progressed through a broken system.

Let us have a balanced conversation. There are things that we need to improve upon. But there are a lot of positive outcomes also coming from our education system. And we celebrate those outcomes year after year. Individuals celebrate their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren who then go on to get scholarships and then go on to compete with the best around the world. And so, let us give credit where credit is due. Notwithstanding the challenges, we do have positive outcomes coming from our education system. But yes, we commonly accept that more needs to be done, and this Bill is evidence of that.

I ask the question: Should the Minister retain legitimate responsibility for public policy? As an elected Member of Parliament, the answer must be yes.

Should the Minister have accountability over the expenditure? The answer must be yes.

And should the Minister be limited in his intervention by the statutory framework that we set? And the answer must be yes.

And so, moving forward, when the Bill begins to speak to how the Authority will carry out its administrative functions, the scope of the Minister's responsibilities will be abundantly clear moving forward. And we will ensure that whatever the responsibilities are, [they] do not lead us back into a status quo situation. Because it would mean that we will go through this process and it will be an exercise in futility.

But the Government is not saying that once we establish the Authority it is an achievement within itself. The Authority still needs to do the work to produce outcomes that are in the best interests of our kids.

Within the legislation, there is an accountability framework. The Authority will be required to establish strategic priorities. All the major activities of the Authority will be governed by the Authority. They will be responsible for operational plans and quantitative assessments. Reporting is also built within the framework of this legislation.

But the KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] that are set by the Board would have us looking at our education system from a different paradigm. Right now, it is a bit politicised with a ton of public announcements over the years as it pertains to what we seek to do, what we seek to implement, the changes we seek to make, the programmes we have put in place, and the expenditure we have attributed to those programmes. But this forces the conversation to shift beyond that to those critical performance indicators.

And then we can answer those questions as to how our kids are faring as it pertains to literacy and numeracy, how our kids are progressing to either employment after school, higher education, or entrepreneurship, being clear on whether or not our teachers and our school leaders are receiving the appropriate level of support that they need, liaise with our parents to determine if they see measurable changes to their kids' educational outcomes. See, the accountability that we are expecting from this Board translates to more than just explaining how funds were spent.

Our future conversations must be about what our children have achieved. And that is the intention of the Minister: To shift from how things are currently done to how things will be done in the future.

One important intervention I want to make, Madam Deputy Speaker, is when we start to talk about education it is not discussed in isolation from workforce development. It is not discussed in isolation from entrepreneurship. We need to ensure that the system that we are designing for our kids in the future is directly aligned with putting those individuals on career pathways at an earlier age, exposing them to the careers that exist in our current and our future world of work, ensuring they understand the principles of entrepreneurship.

And if we have young entrepreneurs, how do we allow these persons to unlock their entrepreneurial spirit, unlock their innovation? With Bermuda's ageing population, Madam Deputy Speaker, we cannot afford to get this wrong. We have large amounts of our workforce over the next five years that will be leaving our workforce. And as a result, it is important that we maximise the capacity of the young ones coming up through our system. It is important that they benefit from Bermuda's growing economy. That the economic growth

does not exclude them. That they are active participants in our workforce, and that they do not feel marginalised when they get in our workforce and they're able to progress through our workforce. That is our aim.

I believe in this House that is what we collectively want to see. But in order to get to a place where this will be true reform, there must be a structural transition. And this is the first step to that, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is clear that we are transitioning from where we currently are to a future state. And no, we are not going to get it right on day one. But is this the appropriate step in the right direction? I believe every Member of this House will say yes.

And so, I thank the Minister for bringing this Bill. Because this Bill is in front of us today and will be passed, that doesn't mean collectively we turn off. It is time for everybody to tune in now. It is an opportunity for us to rally around a different approach as to how we administer education in Bermuda.

Understanding all of the challenges that have been articulated, we can all work on solutions to the problems that we actually face. Every concern that our educators have, that the Ministry may have, that parents may have, deserves an appropriate place on the floor of this House. We should be cognisant of those concerns. But it is not good enough to continue to hear the concerns and not act. And today is a demonstration of us acting, saying yes, we understand the concerns you have raised. And this is our solution to transform the system, to position it to appropriately address the concerns. Because as I articulated, the establishment of this Authority does not solve the problems itself. But at least it puts us on a proper trajectory.

I am going to close with this, Madam Deputy Speaker. Our children deserve a system that works for them. And that is all of our children.

Those of us who come from socioeconomic backgrounds that create impediments to them learning in school need to ensure that they also receive the appropriate intervention required. For our kids who are high-flyers, we need to ensure that we continue to support them in unlocking their full potential as well. For our kids we deem to be at risk, ensuring that there is proper intervention for them as well. And that we constantly show all our children that we care about them, that we care about their future, and that we care about their development, that we seek to empower them, that we as a Government have an unwavering commitment to ensuring that we put them on the best possible road to success.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 7. Member, you have the floor.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I won't be very long. I will just be a few minutes. There has been a lot that has been covered here today. And I do not feel I need to go over things that have already been said largely. But there are a couple of things.

One of the things that I do want to say is that the reason that we are here is not for a party. At least it should not be for a party. The reason that we are here is to represent the interests of our constituents.

And Madam Deputy Speaker, I do a lot of canvassing. And the Member before me, I think for constituency 1, MP Ming, mentioned that when she's out canvassing education is a priority for her constituents, as it is for mine.

And so, I agree with everything that everyone has said in terms as it relates to how we need to make sure that we get this right. Where I do have a bit of concern, though, is even Minister Rabain said in his opening remarks that education needs to be done properly. And we have heard that said several times in different ways.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not envy Minister Rabain because he has a tough job. But one of the consistent themes that I have heard here today is that everybody said that they want to see the best outcome for our children. So, I am at a loss as to why there would not be more of an appetite to make this a bipartisan discussion. Forgetting about amendments that come at the 11th hour, forgetting about op-eds that are appearing in the newspaper. If we truly mean what we say, Madam Deputy Speaker, then our actions would align with that.

This Education Authority is not a silver bullet. But it is a step in the right direction. Where I have concerns personally, one key concern, is the opportunity for Ministerial interference. And I understand that that is not . . . the current Minister has made it clear that that is not the intention that he has. But the current Minister may not be the Minister forever.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I think the Member is actually unintentionally misleading the House. I never did say that. I said that the Bill itself will prevent Ministerial interference from any Minister that sits in this seat.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am a grandparent, and until fairly recently had two grandchildren in the public system. I currently still have one in the public system. And like has already been expressed, I am very, very, very concerned about the trajectory of where our education has been going.

And I think, like my constituents who also have education at the top of their list of concerns, that it is incumbent of us in this House to make sure that we do what is right by all of our children. That is what we said that we wanted to do.

So, we know that educational outcomes are connected to . . . or I should say, yes, good educational outcomes and bad educational outcomes are connected to a myriad of societal either issues or advancements. So why wouldn't we want to make sure that we do the best that we can for our children?

And Madam Deputy Speaker, I disagree. I have heard a number of people say, *Why don't we just . . . we have something now, let's just move on*. But I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will say this to you: A number of the children who have already fallen through the cracks, and those who may potentially fall through the cracks later on, look like us.

So, I find it very difficult. I do not accept the fact that we should then just half-step. And by half-step I mean I am not suggesting that a half-effort has been put in. What I am saying is that there is an opportunity to make improvements. And I do not accept that we in this House should accept that we should just say, *Okay, this is what we have. Let's start and then we can make adjustments down the road.*

That is unacceptable, Madam Deputy Speaker. Especially in circumstances where we say we want to do right by our children. We want to do right by our teachers. We want to do right by our parents. Why wouldn't we pull out all the stops? We say it is not partisan. Why wouldn't we pull out all the stops and say we will come together and come up with what we can agree is going to be in the best interest of our children?

I have a problem with that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Education is one of the most powerful social protections that we have. Why would we not leverage it? Put aside all the other stuff and leverage the opportunity to do right and give our children the best opportunity that we can to advance. I don't understand.

I am disappointed at some of the things that I've heard in here today. Because again, not making this a racial thing, but the reality is a good number of our children in our public system look like us.

The two MPs in front of me, their children are not in public school. But they are willing to speak and stand to try to make sure that things are improved for children. And MP Pearman in front of me is trying to make sure that things are improved. They put their suggestions forward.

Come on, when are we going to stop playing these . . . I'm not going to call them games. But chess moves, games. Okay, games. I'll call it what I think it is. There is too much at stake.

We saw, Madam Deputy Speaker, the results that were published the other day, the reading results and the Cambridge, all of that. We saw it. Things are not good. And it was challenged that we have children who are graduating and they can do what they do when they get their graduation certificates.

I am in HR, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have seen, I have spoken to it. I have had some applications come across my desk where I've got children with graduation certificates from The Berkeley and CedarBridge, and they can't even spell the address, let alone be able to string a proper sentence together, or know how to conduct themselves in an interview. This is the reality of where we are.

I didn't come to this place to play. And I am tired of politicking. Because our children—our future of this country, Madam Deputy Speaker—are at stake. And we cannot continue on this whole vein of, let's just take half a step and keep it moving. It's not right. Educational outcomes are tied to some of the social ills that we see in this country. We're all saying, how can we do this? How can we make things better? How come we've got children that are running out with gangs? How come we've got children disengaged, not showing up to school? They're doing it, and we know they're doing it.

But this is an opportunity. This is our current opportunity to come together to say we are going to do things for the benefit of our children, politics aside. We owe it to this next generation and the current generation. Every opportunity that we have.

One of the things that I was very concerned about when I read through this legislation, a lot of stuff was said. But this looks . . . I don't know if you have ever seen *A Beautiful Mind*, but if you look at my document, it's marked up everywhere because I have a lot of stuff in here that I'm concerned about.

One of the things that I'm . . . a lot of stuff has been spoken here today. One of the things I am concerned about is the fact that I didn't see any place reserved on the Board for a parent. Maybe I missed it. We want their representation and insight, but they have a stake in this game too. Of course, professional people can be parents, but I didn't see that in here saying that you should have at least one member that's a parent.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of information, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of Order

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I think the Member is again unintentionally misleading. There is nothing in this Bill that says that you cannot be a parent and be a Board member. Nothing in this Bill says that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is how I'm saying it. I am saying a parent-representative, to be clear.

An Hon. Member: No, he didn't say that.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I know . . . I know he didn't. Okay?

So, I will stop there because I do not want to keep going on because I said I'd be quick, and I think I've made my point.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Bill?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, after that last speech I could probably not say anything further and we could move this forward. But out of respect for the person who just took her seat and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I want to make a few brief observations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all four of my children go to private school. And so, I have no dog in this fight. But I am standing up to speak tonight because Bermuda's public school system is failing. And because of that, Bermuda is failing.

This debate breaks my heart. It really does. This is one of the two or three most important Bills that I have seen in my entire career [of] eight years in this House. And if we don't get this right, this new Education Authority will fall from that nest and land on that floor and die. Why? Because education can change lives. Education allows for social mobility, and that is a noble goal, so that someone can use education as a vehicle to enhance themselves, to be better, to change social class perhaps, to succeed.

This party, as long as I have been a Member, has called for an independent Education Authority. Now, education is the most important word of those three. Authority is the least, but independent is fundamental. *Fundamental.*

I want to thank those involved, including the Minister across from me and the team, for getting this Bill this far. Thank you! But it's not far enough, and the fact is it doesn't need to go that much further.

The proposals from the Opposition are sensible. They will enhance this Bill, and they will allow us, in two weeks' time, to come back and pass a bipartisan Bill unanimously creating an independent Education Authority. And I don't believe that that is too much to ask.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a few quick points on the past, the present, and the future.

To the past first. It's anecdotal, but those who are on this Island who are older than me speak of a time when Bermuda had an excellent education system, the envy of the world, where our public sector education produced stars, where our entire civil service was populated by those educated, and educated well, in our government system. It is no longer anecdotal to say that there are currently significant concerns about our current public school system.

Now, we can ask why. And I am sure there are all sorts of answers. You could say politicians; that seems a bit unfair. Someone said parents earlier; that was very brave. I don't think we can blame the parents. Maybe it's the students. I think that is entirely wrong. So where does that take us? Well, it takes me to the position that blame is not what we're looking for here. The answer has to be about something other than blame.

The present. I have already said it. I am really disappointed. I consider the Minister of Education to be a decent, hard-working man. I have admired him in his political career. And I think that it wouldn't take much to get us to where we need to get. I really don't. And I think the speaker who spoke before me said: *Enough of the chess games.*

I'm disappointed because one of the phrases I like least in life is the phrase: *Don't let perfection be the enemy of the good.* Why? Because it's trotted out when someone really knows that what they have isn't that good. We can do better.

I am also asking the Minister to adjourn this debate after the last speaker, which is likely to be one or two on my side, and then no doubt the Minister himself. And to agree with us to adjourn the debate, to meet with the Opposition Leader and Shadow Minister for Education, and for the two of them together to go through our proposals. There are 10. The Minister has had them. They are not earth-shattering, but they will make this Bill so much better. And you will then have at least 10 of us on this side. I cannot speak for the Independent in the back, but you will have 10 of us voting with you. And we will be able to say to our Island [that] we all supported this Bill because it is a fundamental change.

What the Opposition Leader said earlier is that the Bill as it currently stands . . . What will be the difference in practice? That is what we are really looking for. What is the difference?

Well, the reason that at least I, and I'll speak for myself, have constantly supported the independent Education Authority was to take the politics out of education. And with respect to the speaker who spoke earlier, one of the speakers who spoke earlier on that side, no, the Minister isn't always right. And a good Minister should recognise that we don't know more than everybody else about everything else. And sometimes it's just better to put it in the hands of the experts.

And so that is why this Bill is a good start. I am not criticising it. I'm just saying it could be so much better. And it would be a lot better for Bermuda if it came out of this House with unanimous support. And I

believe, fundamentally believe, that that's achievable if good faith meetings occur between the Opposition Leader, Shadow Minister of Education, and the Education Minister.

And why not have a bipartisan Bill on an issue so important as this one? What really is the rush? I mean, it's been years. We are back in two weeks on Friday the 20th. We only have, as I understand it, one Bill to do that day. As one of my colleagues behind me said, the Senate doesn't sit until afterwards. So, the two Bills coming out of the Senate won't be with us. Why not make this happen?

When the Minister spoke previously in a Statement in this House, he gave a number of oral assurances. I'm going to take him at his word as a Minister, as a politician, that those assurances were well-meant and true. But the problem with his oral assurances is that he may not be the Minister when this comes to pass. He may not be the Minister next week for all we know. And again, no disrespect intended but let us be real here. An oral assurance from a Minister on the floor of the House doesn't bind his next predecessor, or the person who follows, rather. It doesn't. So that is the past and the present and the future.

The Bill. For a moment, permit me . . . I'm going to put my Shadow Attorney General hat on. I do have a fundamental problem with this Bill, regardless of the 10 OBA points. And that is if we go to the back of the Bill, where people seldom look at the back of the Bill, this Bill is introducing civil penalties to muzzle people from speaking out about problems they see in our education system. I have a fundamental problem with that.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'll take a point of clarification.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Member is intentionally misleading the House.

An Hon. Member: Intentionally?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Intentionally.

I have already spoken to that clause. It is a confidentiality clause. It does not in any way, shape, or form impact the whistle-blower provisions in the Education Bill. Every single . . . and I'm sure that Member knows in his company, if anyone goes and just speaks about company secrets, there will be hell to pay over there.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'm grateful for the clarification from the Minister. That is exactly the sort of oral assurance that doesn't get us anywhere. If we are going to have our whistle-blowing legislation trump what's said in this Bill, supersede what is carried over, let's put it in there.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Let's have that amendment. Let us have that. Indeed, it is one of the 10 called for. It is very easily done. It could be done within two weeks. We could put that amendment in. *But this shall not override protected disclosures of the whistle-blowing legislation in the Employment [Act]*. Easily solved. And the Minister makes my point for me.

Anyway, on the 10 points, the Opposition will address those in Committee. But they are genuine, good-faith attempts to make this the Bill it could be, so that Bermuda's education system could be the education system it should be.

I want to tackle the point raised expressly by MP Jason Hayward. Minister Hayward, the Honourable Minister, told this Honourable House he did not understand why the OBA changes were needed. We can come back, he told this Honourable House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight we are launching a generational change. The work needs to be done now so that it is an independent Education Authority. We must not, as this Bill would do, build a house upon sand. We need a solid foundation. And this Bill could be that foundation with bipartisan efforts. But as we stand here tonight, it is not. And I ask, why not? Why not take the time to make the real changes needed?

We can get this right. Let us take the time to get it right. Let us adjourn the debate, amend the Bill, and then pass the amended Bill unanimously from this House so that Bermudians have faith in an independent Education Authority. And Bermudians might actually have a bit of faith in us again. Let's get it right.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the Bill?

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: There being no other person . . . Oh. I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Member, you have the floor.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My colleagues, in my opinion, have eloquently addressed the plea. They ask that we consider a little more time, just a little more time, until the next session to flesh out some of the concerns that have been raised. And no doubt, if that is not agreed to as we go into Committee, we will have the opportunity to flesh

those things out, yet at the same time, they will not be considered.

Now, we have spent quite a bit of time on this. And I have heard common ground from everyone speaking that this is the way to go. And I do not believe it was an initial solution for the Education Authority by the Progressive Labour Party, but it did become that as time went on. It has been something we have been saying as the One Bermuda Alliance from the very beginning, that we believe an Authority is so much needed in this particular area. And as has been said already for the last 20, 28 years, it has been a political football.

What I do not appreciate is the fact that when we get to this point, and we're offering reliable, earnest solutions or possible ways that we can address this issue of implementing an Authority, that we continue to get: *Oh, we're trying to be politically disruptive*, on something that all of us agree needs to happen, and that is an Authority.

It does not go down well that when we approach the Minister on some of these issues, to then come to the House and be presented with 12 amendments that, had we not asked or brought forward, we wouldn't be even looking at them until we get into Committee. And so, we are being asked to sit down and go through 12 amendments that have been brought here. And as we look at some of these amendments, quite frankly, a lot of work has gone into this here.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order. The Member is intentionally misleading the House. Because I did explain that those amendments were distributed to the Clerk during lunchtime, and he asked me to bring prints, and the prints were brought down right after lunch, and they were available. So, he said they wouldn't have seen it until we got into the Committee stage. That is completely untrue.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

That was explained earlier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Well, let me just put it . . . rephrase it in another way. The Honourable Member talked about how it takes time to put amendments together. I wonder when he got these amendments. I probably assume that he got them before yesterday, if that is what he is saying. So, he could have easily . . . when we presented our amendments, said: *Look, well, I have some amendments as well.* Because we are sitting at the table equally here. But yet, he is point-of-ordering me to say that he got them before.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: There you go.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Member is imputing improper motive.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Chambers finished those . . . I believe we got them around [noon]. It was around [noon] when we got the final comment. As soon as I got them, I notified the Clerk.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm sorry, did he say that he got the final amendments by [noon]? Was it [noon] today we are talking about? Or yesterday?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Again, it's hypocrisy. And the Minister sits here and continues to defend, *to defend,* something that, quite frankly, in the last 15 years that I've been here, probably one other piece of Bill that we've done that was probably even more important, but we came to the table equally to say: *Listen, let's consider this here. Let's consider these things.* We got back: *No.* But yet, 12 come forward. The hard work that the civil servants put into this is scarred by the fact that the Minister himself is trying to defend a position that he can't defend. Come to the table equally. We have been sitting here talking to him in consultation.

This is the kind of thing that destroys the earnest effort our people are putting into this, meant to give to the Minister to work through. And then it gets scarred. The trust is gone.

Now, you know, he can cheekily say about trust. Well, 2012, and 2017, and all of that stuff, which has nothing to do with right now. It has to do with the fact that this Minister has created an atmosphere of mistrust. And people who work in the industry have called for his head several times. And here we have an opportunity to restore that.

I am pleading with the Minister. Come on, man. Sorry, that's a bit common. But Minister, we can get this right within two weeks. And I am not saying that every [one of the] 10 points that we have presented has to go down and has to happen. But at least let's sit down and

discuss them. We presented them to him. No questions asked. No. The answer is no.

But yet here we are. The good work that was done, and some of these are quite basic. So, the Minister has come to at this point, since he has done all this work, he's come to this House with amendments. *Well, we are going to just delete this and delete that.* Some of this stuff I would have thought would have been done by them, but I accept the fact that when we are doing legislation, these things happen. So, we are willing to adjust and to work with this.

But to sit in this Chamber and listen to when we come up with—I have heard some beautiful speeches on both sides—to come up and then say: *Oh, you're just being this, and you're just being that,* over and over and over. Legislation after legislation after legislation, we give amendments. Not one of them is considered. Not one. And the most important piece of legislation that we have come into contact with (just about everybody in this House, outside of maybe Member Swan, who's been in here longer than most of us) . . . this is the most important thing that we could be doing. Another week or two is not going to hurt anything.

But we are just going to go ahead. And just about every other Bill that we question, they say: *Oh, well, you know, we're going to get it done, and we can make amendments afterwards.* We are messing with people's lives.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And yes, I heard. It takes a long time to turn this thing around. Just turn this ship around. So, I would prefer, as some of the Honourable Ministers over on that side have said in the past, *We're going to measure twice and cut once.*

We are actually . . . and we are pleading with the Minister. Let's measure this thing twice. It is not ready. And if it takes a long time to get these things changed, then let's get it as best as possible to the point that no one can really say: *Well, the Minister really didn't try here.*

I'm sorry, but the newspapers are going to see this as . . . and I don't care which one you go to, *TNN, The Royal Gazette,* whatever. It is scarred by the fact that the Minister has said, *Well, we ain't taking anything that you send us. But I'm going to give you these amendments at the last minute on the day that we are making the changes, without any discussion, and we're going to discuss it in this House, and we're going to fix it. But we ain't going to discuss what . . . what you've presented to me.*

How dishonest can you be? And this is a fact, this is a . . . this is a . . . Listen, the former Minister disagreed with the current Minister. So, we need to build that trust back in. We . . . we . . . look . . . we . . . I . . . Let me look at this quote here.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Let me say this here. And this is directly (I'm letting you know) to this Minister; none of the other Ministers, just to this Minister. Sometimes, doing your best is not good enough. And that's when you decide: *Well, maybe I should go somewhere else.* And the only reason I'm saying this here, because I was giving him the benefit of the doubt. Because he's been hypocritical in the approach to this particular Bill. Hypocrisy. Let that sink in.

I agree with the Minister. I mean, he got up and said: *It's time to tune in.* Yes, Minister, it is time to tune in. Let's get this right. Our children were also quoted by a Minister from the Government: *Our children deserve a system that works for them.* I couldn't agree with the PLP Government more. I could not agree . . . You know what? This Bill, if we go through today and approve this Bill, I can assure you that there will be two or three of us who will be talking about the fact that we did this until the cows came home. Because I can assure you, the chickens are going to come back. It's going to take . . . how long now? How long is it going to take to implement this first phase? We couldn't even give away light bulbs in time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: How long is it going to take? And that's why when I say, sometimes doing your best . . . maybe it is time for another Minister to take over, to get this done and get this through. It is unfair to the public, it is unfair to the teachers, it is unfair to the principals, it is unfair to the parents, it is unfair to the kids, and it is unfair to the grandkids who are coming and the great grandkids who are coming. Because 20 years from now, if we do not just make some subtle adjustments in turning this ship, they will be calling it the Devil's Isles.

And most of us (when I turn around and I look) have come from an education where our parents and everyone was involved. But back then, brother from constituency 2, it wasn't just the parents. It was the community. Yes, everybody knew if you didn't get home in time. It's not that way anymore. You know? So we had a backup, we had a system, a safety net that, beyond the school system, there was a cultural community system that existed that could catch that. If we're honest with each other, we don't have that anymore. It is rare. So, the system has to be robust. The system has to work for everyone.

And I disagree with my honourable colleague, Mr. Scott [Pearman], when he said that, you know*, his dog is not in this fight*. Basically, that is what he was saying.

Well, let me assure you that if we don't get this right, we're already having violence and mental issues amongst our young kids at a rate that I have never seen before. They are coming to your house, and they are not going to ask you for a bottle of mayonnaise. That is what we are dealing with. And they are not just going

to come to my house. They are going to come to Scott Pearman's house too. So, you have got a stake in this.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of clarification. Will the Honourable Minister accept the point of clarification?

[Laughter]

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Mr. Scott Pearman: I clearly think that every single Bermudian has a stake in this. I was just disclosing my interests so it wouldn't be thrown back in my face.

The Deputy Speaker: Right

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I think we are all here to do the right thing. But I thank the Honourable Member, MP Cannonier, and I accept his correction.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Well done, man.

Another Hon. Member: You got mayonnaise?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I know everyone wants to go home, so I'm going to tie this up.

Listen, the fact that the Minister criticises us for presenting recommendations, yet brings recommendations to the table, should not be the subject matter right now. But he made it the subject matter through the hypocrisy that we heard today. Because everyone has spoken quite eloquently to the issue of how we want to improve things. And then to stand on your feet and criticise the OBA for attempting to give suggestions on how we can improve things is a no-go.

And I'm going to say this here: The Minister needs to go. He has made another fatal mistake. You cannot, when we are at the table working with you in earnest, then turn around and be hypocritical in this approach and scar the whole issue itself of a good Authority. It's time. And sometimes your best isn't good enough. Be a man and say: *Let's have someone approach this from a different angle*. And maybe we can get some good stuff done in this Ministry.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

An Hon. Member: No others.

The Deputy Speaker: There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Acting Speaker, or do you prefer Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: It doesn't matter.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam [Deputy] Speaker, one thing that I do know is I expected a robust debate. And you heard me say that in my opening remarks that we are going to have a robust debate. I said we're going to hear a lot of things. We are going to hear about accountability. We are going to hear about ministerial interference. We are going to hear a lot of . . . we are going to hear about the makeup of the Board, and we were going to hear all of those things.

But I have listened to Members opposite, and they are standing firm that they presented 10 options. But for the listening public, and for anyone in this room, did anybody hear when they presented those options?

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, let me talk about this. Madam Deputy Speaker, in the act—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —in the act of bipartisanship, I contacted the One Bermuda Alliance nine weeks ago and said: *I would like to give you a briefing of the Bill, just you.* They finally did come, and we sat down on September 16. We gave a full briefing of the Bill on September 16. In that meeting, I said I want to move forward as bipartisan as possible. Please let me know if there's anything about this Bill you would like to discuss. That was seven weeks ago, seven weeks and two days.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Seven weeks and two days ago.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I then tabled the Bill on the 18th . . . on October 2. Same with my Minister[ial], with my tabling Statements, I said the same thing. Reach out, reach out, let me know.

I then had a briefing with all Members of the legislature on October 28. On October 28, I said the same thing.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: If you have any issues, let me know.

Later that day, an op-ed appeared in *The Royal Gazette,* penned [by] Senator Victoria Cunningham, that said: *Here are all the amendments that we want to make to this Bill*.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was after those discussions, the last that I had was on the 28th. I had about six between them, between the ones I had with the One Bermuda Alliance and forwarded on. It was

from that that we sat down and said: *Here are some concerns that have been raised. How do we address those in this Bill?* And that's where the amendments we are talking about today came from. From the feedback that we got from those. We did not get any feedback—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: We did not get any feedback from the Opposition. So let me talk about when we did get the feedback. Yesterday afternoon.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yesterday afternoon, approximately about quarter to five, I got a message from the Honourable Member, the Opposition Leader [saying]: *Hey, we have some issue. We have some things. Why don't you consider not doing the debate tomorrow?*

And I said—

An Hon. Member: At quarter to five?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —*Share with me. Share with me what it is, what your concerns are.* And that's when he sent me the 10 things.

And I did reply to him. I said, *I looked at them.* And I said,—

An Hon. Member: The 10 things. The 10 things.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And if you don't mind, Ben, I know we talk, I know we talk about not speaking,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —speaking on the things that we say—

An Hon. Member: Don't do it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Because you are under pressure. That's why you are doing that.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But my response—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: My response was: *Thank you for providing the Opposition's proposed improvements for the Education Authority Act 2026. I have reviewed each of the proposals and considered whether they warrant additional changes to the legislation. I am not persuaded that they do. Government would therefore proceed with the Bill and the amendments as it has already determined to bring forward.*

So, I told him about the amendments yesterday.

The Government will . . . I appreciate the Opposition providing their position in advance. The merits of the respective positions can be fully ventilated during the parliamentary debate.

And I believe we ventilated them during this debate. And I am happy with what we have said.

I think I have listened to what I would not consider,—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —what I would not consider issues that prevent us from moving forward. One thing that I have learned in this position is people . . . people tend to get emotional about education when it's in their face. Education happens every day.

I think Minister Hayward said it best. *Time for everyone to tune in with what's happening in education.* The types of conversations we have been having have been happening for years. They have now come to a point, and what I have recognised being in this position, when they do come to a point, that's when everybody stands up. That's when the people who have just been watching it pass by, because they really didn't interfere with them at that time, now they want to have . . . they want to stand up, and they want to talk about it.

But that's okay. We get where that's from. But what we have is . . . we have what I consider confusion coming from across the aisle here. So, I have listened carefully.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable [Minister], as he has said to what I was saying, is intentionally misleading the House that the OBA was not being fair in its approach to trying to discuss this.

You have a Bill. He gives a briefing. We don't even have a full Bill yet. Then when a full Bill comes out that we can look at, you think that we are going to turn around in a month, in two weeks, three weeks, and have it all hashed out? This is . . . this Bill is expansive.

An Hon. Member: I think he said to Chambers in 21—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Expansive, okay? It's a lot of stuff in here.

It is disingenuous to suggest to the public that we just . . . all this time's gone by, and we just came up with these things when, in fact, he's being a hypocrite

because he just presented to us today amendments. He's defending the same hypocrisy.

The Minister needs to resign. He's got to go. This is unacceptable!

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, Member, thank you. Take your seat.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Member, take your seat.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: One second. Thank you. Okay, okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. I don't remember suggesting anything. I just gave dates.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: All I gave was dates, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Honourable [Minister],—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —again, is misleading the House. Not only did he give dates, he started out by inferring that we had enough time.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He did it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you.

Well, I have listened very carefully to the One Bermuda Alliance. I have listened for a plan. I have listened for an alternative. I have listened for one concrete, deliverable proposal that would move a single Bermudian child forward.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. Again, the Honourable [Minister]—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order. The Honourable [Minister] is misleading the House. He's saying he's looking for a plan. Maybe he doesn't understand his job. He's presenting the Bill, and we are presenting amendments. We are not here to present a plan to the Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My point is, misleading the House. He is saying we need to present a plan. He doesn't understand what he's doing.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We need to present a plan!

The Deputy Speaker: You have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: What I heard coming opposite is a speech that could have been delivered on any Bill, by any Opposition in any Parliament. A speech about trust, a speech about feelings, and about perception, but remarkably thin on substance.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Point of order, Madam [Deputy] Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: We are going to be here all night.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, so one person on this side actually is part of the same party that the Minister is, and they echoed some of the same things that we put forward. Is that confusion?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister . . . continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I quote the Opposition Leader, when he said, *This is a major reason why the One Bermuda Alliance has supported an independent Education Authority*. He also said, *And this is why we want a system that can hold a steady course, not interrupted by political cycles*.

Hon. Ben Smith: Correct.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And I completely agree with him. And this is precisely what this Bill delivers.

Yet in the very same speech, the [Shadow] Minister proceeded to demand that Parliament legislate the final answer to many questions that the independent Authority is being established to examine.

Hon. Ben Smith: To have a baseline?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: He wants independence, yet he wants Parliament to pick the assessment model. He wants independence, but he wants Parliament to pick the board structure for every school.

Hon. Ben Smith: No, I said have a board.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: He wants independence, but he wants Parliament to prescribe the professional development framework before the educators have been consulted.

Hon. Ben Smith: Point of order. The Minister—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Ben Smith: —is intentionally misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Ben Smith: If you're going to quote me, make sure you quote me correctly. Because what I was referring to *very clearly* was that we needed to make sure that the legislation said that we needed to have these things. I didn't say how we were going to prescribe them.

But the problem that we have is, the Minister has put in this Bill a bunch of times that he can interfere. That is the reason why we are saying it no longer becomes independent. That has to be corrected. Otherwise, we mess up the next system the way that this Minister has messed up this one.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam.

I will say it again because I said it in my opening. You cannot call for independence and call for autonomy for years and then micromanage it by amendment when it finally does arrive.

Hon. Ben Smith: You have to build trust because you lost it.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: We can always argue that this Authority needs greater independence while simultaneously asking Parliament to make all of its major design decisions before its members have even taken their seats. That's not real reform. That's just a press release and a soundbite.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have had a long day today. It's been an absolutely long day. I do believe that when we do get into Committee and we actually speak to the clauses, we will see where some of the soundbites that I have heard today will fall away. I honestly believe that. Because when we put this method, when we put this Act forward, the one thing that we wanted to design was a system that put professionals in charge of running the education system.

I believe some people have misinterpreted what this will exactly do and we spent a lot of time talking about what this Bill does and what it does not.

We hear the comments coming from that side about *that's what the whole country does*. Madam Deputy Speaker, one thing that has . . . and it was a surprise to me that it was even published today. *The Royal Gazette* published an independent poll that was taken . . . and I can't remember the name of the polling station—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —and you will never hear me quote *The Royal Gazette* because this was like . . . this was the most—

[Laughter and Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —this was the oddest thing, and so—

The Deputy Speaker: I need to hear the Minister.
Thank you.
Continue, Minister.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And so, . . . we talk about this, and I was actually shocked when it was forwarded to me that this poll said that 80 per cent . . . that I believe it was 80 per cent,—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —that this independent poll said that the majority of Bermudians that they polled support the Authority.

It also interestingly said that the majority of Bermudians they polled supported the movement from a three-tier to a two-tier system, which actually just really blew me away, and everybody that we have talked about in my chat groups is like, *I can't believe it, that they would actually print that*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But no, this was an independent one, an omnibus poll that was taken, and I thought it was actually . . . it was interesting.

But, Madam Speaker, I am not going to prolong the inevitable. So, I will return to where I began.

The Honourable Members opposite have delivered one of the most persuasive arguments for this Bill to move forward that Chambers has ever heard. They have done a better job than I have proving to the public that this needs to be in place. We have heard political soundbites. We have heard things, interpretations of this Act, that are just simply not true. They have told us the system has suffered—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —they have told us that the system has suffered from political turmoil. This Bill fixes that.

They have told us accountability is unclear. This Bill fixes that.

They have told us services do not join up around the child. This Bill fixes that.

They have told us that trust must be rebuilt. This Bill fixes that.

And by taking the day-to-day governance of our schools out of the hands of politicians, including, Madam Deputy Speaker, my own.

So, I will not be distracted by the 10 questions dressed up as a plan that were presented to me late yesterday afternoon. I will not throw the Department of Education under a bus for political convenience.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

[Crosstalk]

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The 10 points that were presented as some kind of inadequate plan, what I would say is he should be subscribing—

An Hon. Member: Is his [microphone] on? I can't hear him.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —to the hypocrisy he has presented by bringing amendments to this House at the last minute.

An Hon. Member: We can't hear him.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: What's your point? What is your point . . .

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Minister was misleading the House earlier regarding this omnibus survey. And I want to clarify for the listening audience.

It polled whether or not people supported an independent Education Authority. That support is 8 out of 10. It does not speak directly to the Minister's legislation. So, to support an independent Education Authority is one thing. It does not lend support to the Minister's legislation. And I want to be clear with people who are listening, because he is way off. He is way off.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Ben Smith: Make sure you get it right.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you for that clarity. It also doesn't support the 10 amendments either.

An Hon. Member: No, it doesn't!

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, I will not take lectures of continuity from a party that has had four Education Ministers in five years.

An Hon. Member: Oh, come on!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I will not take lectures from a party that had four education Ministers in four years and cut funding for children.

We heard opposite talk about generations lost. Anyone who started in Primary 1 in 2012 would have passed through the system. So that's a generation there.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. The Minister is misleading the House, and he is making a mockery of this debate.

Nine years that Government has had and he's referring to 2012 and 20—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: This is about our children. This is a mockery. His Cabinet Minister's colleagues should be checking him right now because this is not looking good, honestly.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Minister, continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it takes 13 years for a child to pass through the public system: 2012—

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: So do the basic math.

Four and a half years versus nine.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —2012—

An Hon. Member: That's basic.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Deputy Speaker, 2012 was more than 13 years ago.

An Hon. Member: Jennifer Smith came in on the basis of reforming education. Nothing happened.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: In nine years, they have made it worse.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think our children have waited long enough and I think all of us here have waited long enough.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: This Act establishes, this Act designs and consults and Parliament decides what follows. And with that, Madam [Deputy Speaker], I commend this Bill to the House.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Standing Order 21(1)(b)]

Mr. Scott Pearman: In accordance with Standing Order 21(1)(b), I move for the adjournment of this debate, and I know that there are people behind me who will call for a names vote.

Names.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Calling for names.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Calling for names to adjourn the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

That means that we will have to take a vote by name. So, I think we have two minutes for any Members who are in here to get to their seats and then the Clerk will start the vote.

An Hon. Member: Two or five [minutes]?

The Deputy Speaker: I think two minutes to get down here. You have to be in the House.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I can look . . . it's two minutes. I'll ask the Clerk, too . . . it's two minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: It's always been two minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: You are at the door. Okay, Clerk, what time do you have for the beginning of those two minutes? 9:15 *[sic]*? All right, thank you.

We have two minutes and I am hoping that people who are in other rooms hear.

An Hon. Member: Started when?

The Deputy Speaker: It started at . . . was it 9:14 *[sic]*? [It was] 9:15 *[sic]*, thank you.

An Hon. Member: Okay, so you've got about a minute.

Another Hon. Member: A minute left.

The Deputy Speaker: [At] 9:15 *[sic]*, according to his . . .

[Crosstalk and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry; we said . . . sorry, I said 9:15. I meant 8:15.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. You must be in your own seats.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you must be in your own seat. You cannot sit in a different seat.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Clerk, what time is it?

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: It is just about up.

That's it. Doors are locked, please. All doors are . . . are all doors locked? Okay, because I see a gentleman walking now.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Oh. Okay.

Thank you.

Clerk, can you start the vote?

The Clerk: Okay . . . Members—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: The Clerk will, yes.

The Clerk: Members, we are voting on a motion by the Honourable Member, Mr. Pearman, that on . . . per the provision of Standing Order 21(1)(b), the debate on this Bill, the second reading motion, be adjourned.

So those in favour will vote Aye, and those opposed will vote Nay. I will call the names now.

DIVISION

[Education Authority Act 2026, motion to adjourn second reading debate, Standing Order 21(1)(b)]

Ayes: 10

Mr. V. Campbell
Hon. L. C. Cannonier
Dr. D. DeCouto
Hon. M. Fahy
Mr. S. Pearman
Mr. J. Richardson
Mr. D. Robinson
Hon. B. Smith
Ms. L. Smith
Ms. R. Tucker

Nays: 11

Hon. J. Adams
Hon. O. Darrell
Mr. C. L. Dickinson
Hon. T. Furbert
Hon. J. Hayward
Mrs. R. Ming
Hon. D. V. S. Rabain
Mr. W. L. Scott
Mr. S. Simmons
Mr. H. K. E. Swan
Mr. N. S. Tyrrell

Absent: 13

Pastor L. Bean
Hon. E. D. Burt
Hon. Z. J. S. De Silva
Hon. Rev. Dr. E. A. Dill
Mr. C. Famous
Hon. W. Furbert
Mr. R. King
Hon. A. Lightbourne
Mr. D. Lister III
Mr. J. S. Simmons
Mr. M. A. Weeks
Mr. P. Wilmot
Hon. K. N. Wilson

The Clerk: Okay. All right, Madam Deputy Speaker, the vote I count is Ayes 10, the Nays 11. So, the motion is defeated.

[Motion to adjourn second reading debate on the Bill entitled Education Authority Act 2026 was defeated by majority on division.]

Several Hon. Members: Woo-hoo!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Okay, Minister, continue.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes . . . is the microphone on?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, I said I moved, and he asked to adjourn after I did that.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, I thought . . . I thought you hadn't moved it yet. I thought you started to.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I did.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

It has been moved that the Bill be committed.

Are there any objections?

So committed.

I call on . . . who wants to sit in the seat? Scott would you like to come? Or Lawrence? Either one of you may come. Come to the front . . . and if you want to share it you can, because we might be here a while . . . on the clauses.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 8:24 pm

[Mr. Scott Simmons, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

EDUCATION AUTHORITY ACT 2026

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled Education Authority Act 2026.

I am sure there's every anticipation that the—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: We will be here for four hours—

The Chairman: —Committee will be as long as it was in the actual hearing of the Bill.

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

Minister—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman—

The Chairman: You have the floor.

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

Mr. Chairman, this Bill seeks to establish an autonomous body—

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

The Chairman: Minister, hold for a moment. I am prepared to accept.

POINT OF ORDER

[Standing Order 32(15)]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. In accordance with Standing Order 32(15), I move that the Committee of the whole [House] do rise and report progress to this Honourable House on this Committee on this bill.

The Chairman: It has been so moved according to the clauses that the House—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Calling for names.

The Chairman: —rise and report progress. He has called for names.

Set the time, Clerk.

Where is the buzzer?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: We are going to wait for our two minutes to be expired.

[Pause]

The Chairman: The two minutes have expired. I am prepared to accept. The motion is for us to [rise] and report progress. I am going to ask the Clerk to go ahead and read and then go right ahead with the vote.

They have asked for names.

The Clerk: All right. Members, we are voting on the motion by Mr. Pearman to have the Committee rise and report progress on the Committee stage of the Bill.

So those in favour will vote Aye. Those opposed will vote Nay. Calling the names now.

DIVISION

[Education Authority Act 2026, motion to rise and report progress, Standing Order 32(15)]

Ayes: 11

Mr. V. Campbell
Hon. L. C. Cannonier
Dr. D. DeCouto
Hon. M. Fahy
Mr. R. King
Mr. S. Pearman
Mr. J. Richardson
Mr. D. Robinson
Hon. B. Smith
Ms. L. Smith
Ms. R. Tucker

Nays: 9

Hon. J. Adams
Hon. O. Darrell
Hon. T. Furbert
Hon. J. Hayward
Mrs. R. Ming
Hon. D. V. S. Rabain
Mr. W. L. Scott
Mr. H. K. E. Swan
Mr. N. S. Tyrrell

Absent: 13

Pastor L. Bean
Hon. E. D. Burt
Hon. Z. J. S. De Silva
Mr. C. L. Dickinson
Hon. Rev. Dr. E. A. Dill
Mr. C. Famous
Hon. W. Furbert
Hon. A. Lightbourne
Mr. D. Lister III
Mr. J. S. Simmons
Mr. M. A. Weeks
Mr. P. Wilmot
Hon. K. N. Wilson

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: The vote . . . oh, you can go ahead.

The Clerk: Oh, okay.

Mr. Chairman, the vote is 11 Ayes and 9 Nays. The motion is affirmed.

The Chairman: The motion is affirmed.

[Motion to rise and report progress on the Bill entitled Education Authority Act 2026 was carried by majority on division.]

The Clerk: The Committee will rise—

The Chairman: And the Committee will rise and report progress.

[Crosstalk]

The Clerk: Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

House resumed at 8:33 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

EDUCATION AUTHORITY ACT 2026

The Deputy Speaker: It has been brought to my attention that there was a motion that we rise and report progress. And that was affirmed [by] 11 to 9, correct? Okay, so we will rise and then report progress.

Members, based on that, the business for the Government is over. And I think we have a private Bill that you will do.

PETITIONS

ANTHEA INSURANCE LIMITED ACT 2026

HODLIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. ACT 2026

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I move that the following petitions, together with the report of the Joint Select Committee on Private Bills, which was presented on 6 November 2026, be now considered.

Namely, first, the petition of Appleby (Bermuda) Limited for Anthea Insurance Limited; and secondly, the petition of Appleby (Bermuda) Limited for HODLife Insurance Company Ltd.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move for leave to introduce and read for the first time by their titles the following private Bill—

The Deputy Speaker: Hold on one second.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: So . . . agreed to?

Agreed. Continue.

PRIVATE BILLS

FIRST READINGS

ANTHEA INSURANCE LIMITED ACT 2026

HODLIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. ACT 2026

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will start again. Madam Deputy Speaker.

I move for leave to introduce and read for the first time by their titles the following private Bills entitled: one, Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026, and two, HODLife Insurance Company Ltd. Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none. Agreed to.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Deputy 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 Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections?

There being none, agreed to.

Members, the necessary certificates have been furnished. And the private . . . you have to read each one, right? The private Bill is—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I don't have the certificates, no.

So, do I need to read them?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, just the names again.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Fine.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay. Right. Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Read the names again, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: You are going to—

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, the certificates having been . . . the necessary certificates having been furnished and confirmed by the Speaker, I do move in relation to

Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026, and secondly, HODLife Insurance Company Ltd. Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay . . . and next on your . . . move that the provisions of Standing Order . . . 33(7)(a)—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

STANDING ORDER 33(7)a)

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that under the provisions of Standing Order 33(7)(a), the remaining stages of the said private Bills be undertaken forthwith.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none. Continue.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

ANTHEA INSURANCE LIMITED ACT 2026

HODLIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. ACT 2026

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the said private Bills be now read for the second time in the House by their titles only, their titles being Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026, and HODLife Insurance Company Ltd. Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections?
There are none. Continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the clauses and preambles of the said private Bills be approved.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections?
There are none.

PRIVATE BILLS

THIRD READINGS

ANTHEA INSURANCE LIMITED ACT 2026

HODLIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD. ACT 2026

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Speaker, I move that the two said private Bills be now read the third time in the House by their titles only and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections?
There are none.
The private Bills are now passed.

[Motion carried: The Anthea Insurance Limited Act 2026 and HODLife Insurance Company Ltd. Act 2026 were read a third time and passed.]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Members.
That brings us to the end of business today.
May I have a Minister?

[Crosstalk]

An Hon. Member: Let them run it. Let them run it.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that we adjourn the House to the next sitting of November 20.

The Deputy Speaker: At ten o'clock.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: At ten o'clock.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. It has been moved that we meet again on November 20 at ten o'clock.
Does anyone wish to speak to that motion?
I recognise the Member from constituency 1. Member, you have the floor, and I want to remind Members that you have a maximum of 20 minutes.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mrs. Renee Ming: Mine is going to be very brief.
Madam Deputy Speaker, I would normally have done this on the congrats and obits, and I don't want to wait for two weeks. But I just want to give a big shout out, huge congratulations to Bermuda's newest captain, Tariq Lynch-Wade. Today, he has become captain. So, he now can . . . doesn't need instruction, can do it all on his own.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mrs. Renee Ming: I am associating . . . no, I am not going to associate the House. We can bring it again next time, but it's just really great news.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mrs. Renee Ming: And I am sure he's an inspiration to some of the up-and-coming persons who may be interested in the industry.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank—

Mrs. Renee Ming: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 15. Minister, you have the floor.

TRAGIC DEATH OF LAQUAN THOMAS: ROAD SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR BEREAVED FAMILIES

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, good evening.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was a little caught off guard this evening by the speed of which the proceedings—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —went this evening. But nonetheless, it was my intention to invite some special people to the House this evening. Nonetheless, I will give this speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak about the tragic death of Mr. Laquan Thomas. Mr. Laquan Thomas was a young Bermudian whose life was lost following a collision on Malabar Road earlier this year.

Laquan was a constituent of mine. I have been in contact with members of his family, and more specifically, his mom, Ms. Chantelle Thomas. Laquan had many siblings who continue to struggle with the devastating consequences of his death. Laquan was a son, a brother, a fiancé, a friend, and a valued member of our community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, he was a young man with ambitions, relationships and a future ahead of him. For his family, his death has left a void that can never be filled. And that grief has been compounded by their concerns, quite frankly, about the circumstances of his death, the investigation that followed, and the eventual outcome of the court proceedings.

I want his family to know, and I said that to his mom when we had lunch, and I told her that it will be my duty as a representative of her and her family to bring this matter to the floor of this place. And their concerns deserve to be taken seriously, and they deserve to be treated with compassion, dignity, and respect.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the family has raised some serious questions about several aspects of this case. These include the collection and handling of evidence, the decisions made during the investigation, the change that ultimately changed the charge pursued, the sentence handed down, and the communication that they did or did not receive throughout the process.

I recognise that some explanations have been provided publicly about the changing of decisions and the factors considered in such sentencing. But explanations appearing in the public domain do not necessarily mean that this family has received the information they need, or that their concerns have been adequately addressed. I am not going to stand here and judge the conduct of the police, the decisions of the prosecution, or the judgment of the court. Those institutions have very important roles to play and very important responsibilities, and their independence must be and will be respected.

But I will say this, Madam Deputy Speaker: A family that has lost a loved one should not have to fight to understand what happened. A family who has lost a loved one should not have to question why decisions were made and how the system that is there to serve them reached its conclusions.

They deserve clear information, Madam Deputy Speaker, appropriate opportunities to raise concerns, and confidence that those concerns will be considered fairly. And I believe that we should be willing to ask whether the arrangements that are in place to support families following collisions are meeting those expectations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this case has also brought focus to wider questions about the way Bermuda responds when lives are lost on our roads. The family has pointed to other cases in which different circumstances are imposed. And I understand why they are asking these questions about consistency, about fairness, about accountability. But we must recognise that every case has its own facts, its own evidence, its own legal considerations, and that sentencing is properly a matter for another place.

But it is also legitimate in this House, this Honourable House, Madam Deputy Speaker, to examine whether our legislation remains fit for purpose. Do our laws provide an appropriate framework for accountability and deterrence? Are they keeping pace with what we know about the cause of death and serious injury on our roads? And are the different parts of the system working as effectively as they should? Respecting the independence of the judiciary does not remove the responsibility of this legislature to keep the law under review.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's not lost on me. And I will acknowledge that I speak today in more than one capacity. I am the elected representative of the Thomas family. But I am also the Minister responsible for transport, the Minister responsible for road safety, and a member of this Government. I do not have the luxury of just simply identifying problems. I have a responsibility to help address them.

We have known for some time that Bermuda faces significant challenges in reducing road deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The Government, the Road Safety Council, the Bermuda Police Service, community organisations, and many others have undertaken important work to address these challenges. And I would also recognise the efforts of the Honourable Member from the other side. I recognise those efforts.

I recognise the commitment of the people involved in this challenge. But we also must acknowledge that the continued loss of life on our roads demands that we examine what more needs to be done, where

our existing approaches are falling short, and how we can effectively, as has been said in this place many times, work together. That includes examining the responsibilities of me, the Minister of Transport, and the Government itself. This is why I have argued that Bermuda needs a more integrated approach to road safety.

We have heard proposals in this House for stronger penalties, additional enforcement measures, including those that were brought forward by the Opposition. I recognise the intent behind those proposals.

I welcome the attention given to road safety across this Honourable House. And I have also been clear in my office that legislative changes, however well-intentioned, cannot on their own deliver the scale of change that Bermuda needs.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Owen Darrell: Stronger penalties may have an important role to play. Their effectiveness will depend on what happens across the wider system. It depends on preventing dangerous behaviour in the first place, detecting offences, gathering reliable evidence, enforcing law, consistently ensuring that people understand the consequences of their actions. It also depends on safer roads, better information about the causes of collisions, education, community engagement, stronger coordination between agents responsible for different parts of the system.

As the experience of Laquan Thomas' family reminds us, we must also consider what happens after a serious or fatal collision. How are these investigations conducted? How are the families informed and supported? How do we ensure that lessons are learned?

These are reasons why Government's response must go further than any single Bill, penalty, enforcement measure. That is where we have been undertaken to work to strengthen Bermuda's approach to road safety and examine how different parts of the system can work together more effectively.

You have heard about it in different places, but our recent work (I can tell you, you will be hearing more about it soon) has examined the existing arrangements, the responsibilities of different agencies, the gaps and the opportunities for improvement and the foundations for a more integrated approach.

The opportunity is now here to bring together everyone: legislation, enforcement, road infrastructure, education, public health, community action and accountability within a more coherent and sustained approach. It also means being clear about who is responsible for what, how decisions are made, how progress is monitored and how we know whether our efforts are actually making a difference.

We cannot afford to treat every single collision as an isolated tragedy, respond to the immediate public concern and then, as I say, return back to business as usual. That is not, Madam Deputy Speaker, why Chantelle Thomas and her family elected me to serve and represent them.

We have to be prepared to learn from these events and make the necessary changes to prevent further loss of life. And that responsibility belongs to all of us in Government across this House and throughout the community.

In relation to the concerns raised by Laquan's family, I intend to continue supporting them in seeking the appropriate explanations through every single channel that is available to them.

I also believe that there are some broader questions worth examining about how families are informed and supported during these collisions and how road safety arrangements learn from the circumstances of those collisions. Those are matters that I intend to pursue with my responsibilities and, where necessary, I will raise with my Cabinet colleagues.

I have heard the pleas of the Member, MP Jarion Richardson, from the other side. I have heard them. We have spoken and there will be a commitment to work together on this issue.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I want to finish again where I began, with Laquan Thomas and his family.

There's nothing that I can say in the 20 minutes on a motion to adjourn speech in the House of Assembly that will bring Laquan back. Not a thing, Madam Deputy Speaker. Nothing I can do to erase the pain that his siblings, that his mother, that his father, that his fiancé, that his friends have experienced.

And while today I am focusing on Laquan Thomas, there are other constituents who I also represent (and I will not call them by name) who are seeking similar answers for similar circumstances. I was able to successfully arrange a meeting with one family with the Commissioner of Police today. Every time I go to another father's house of a man who lost his son in July, another constituent of mine, the tears in his eyes flow simply because he does not have any answers.

But I will continue to listen. I will continue to serve. And what we can do is commit to taking their concerns seriously. We can ensure that the questions that they are raising receive the appropriate consideration from the appropriate locations. And we can use the responsibility entrusted in us, both sides of this House, to strengthen the systems intended to protect the lives of Bermudians.

We owe it to families to give them more than sympathy, Madam Deputy Speaker. We owe to them a road safety system that is effective. We owe to them a road safety system that is accountable and committed to preventing other families experiencing the same loss.

As Laquan Thomas' constituency MP, I will continue to support his family. And as the Minister responsible for Transport, I accept my responsibility to

help make Bermuda's road safer, work with colleagues on both sides of the House to deliver the improvements that this community deserves.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22 *[sic]*.

Member, you have . . . [constituency] 23, sorry. You have the floor.

TRAGIC DEATH OF LAQUAN THOMAS: ROAD SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR BEREAVED FAMILIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I think it only fair to stand up and support the Minister in this, because that was as eloquent as it was responsible. And when there is an opportunity for this ancient and Honourable House to be unified, we should take it. We are sent here in various . . . from different places, but for one job. And to that regard, although we will disagree, and that's literally what we are here for . . . we must be capable of agreeing.

And in this regard, the Opposition agrees with the Honourable Minister of what needs to happen, the urgency of it, and the people who are impacted.

And so, to that regard, this will not become an opportunity for politics, the way it is advertised. This will become an opportunity for us as an Honourable House to decide on the future of road safety and we will work towards that goal.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members?

I recognise the Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

NEED FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, for the record, I just want to share a couple of the benchmarks that I mentioned in a previous motion to adjourn speech given in October. It might have been 2 October [2026] I believe (it was very near my birthday), because I think they were pertinent. I didn't table them, but I have saved them and I will share them with the House so that they can be a matter for the record.

One of them dealt with minimum benchmarks of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [CPA]. And it comes in section 1: Elections Conduct and Rules.

And number [1.4] of the Minimum Benchmarks is, "There shall be legislation to ensure appropriate campaign finance laws are in place to regulate the manner and extent to which political parties and candidates may receive monetary contributions from individuals and corporations."

I state this because, Madam [Deputy Speaker], I will also share, just for the record, the record of the motion that I carried back in 2012 as a Member of this Honourable House following a very serious time in Bermuda politics when it exposed to me how significant those rules are. And the fact that notwithstanding the amount of money that goes through our . . . trillions of dollars that go through our economy, that in one of the most sophisticated economies in the entire world, we do not meet those minimum benchmarks.

I made mention that in . . . for the CPA in Uganda, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was selected to be a panellist on this very subject and shared that point amongst others that I shared.

One of the other benchmarks was the very next one, number [1.5], which was included in my presentation at that forum, and that is, "An independent Electoral Commission or similar authority shall be established for the management of the conduct of elections and its tasks shall include monitoring the election expenses of parliamentary candidates and political parties."

I believe I made mention that, in fact, one of the members of the Boundaries Commission, of our current Boundaries Commission, is, in fact, the Electoral Commissioner for Trinidad. And I just wanted to make mention of these minimum benchmarks that we do not meet because they are important that the CPA have . . . and this is an updated version of the CPA benchmarks that we still do not meet in that category.

Having been one who has led a political party who experienced some of the things that I see still happening today in some instances. I felt it necessary to share that if we were to follow these benchmarks and other benchmarks that are included that meet minimum standards, they may, in fact, save us from ourselves.

Another benchmark that I shared on the minimum benchmarks is this, Madam Deputy Speaker, is number 23 *[sic]*. Any restrictions . . . pardon, 24 . . . sorry, 3.2, sorry. "Rules governing public and private funding of political parties and candidates shall be fair, transparent, and accountable."

And I say this because these benchmarks that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association that we attend, that we subscribe to have put these minimum standards in place for very significant reasons.

And yes, because I have been in this Legislature since 1998, since running in 1983, I feel it my duty to point out that we do not meet these standards and

we fall short when we have situations that these could certainly help clarify as we . . . along our way.

[Benchmark] 3.3, "The Legislature shall have procedures in place for the formal recognition and registration of political parties which have representation in the Legislature."

Now, somebody [might] say that might not be of any consequence, but it has . . . I have seen how that has happened. We saw in the last election where you had persons who were quasi-independent but operating collectively, and rules such as these identified . . . we are not the first jurisdiction to come across these types of anomalies, and there will be clear rules.

There are other benchmarks, Madam [Deputy] Speaker. I will conclude on one today, and that is the autonomy of Parliament, of which I know I have great support with on this. It is very, very important. I have seen its significance, and I see where we need to ensure that . . . we talked about an independent Authority for Education. The House of Assembly and the Office of the Speaker are independent authorities, and as one who has been around a long time, I feel it incumbent upon me to say that we need to ensure that these minimum standards are met in our Parliament. And there are other benchmarks, and I would encourage other Members to acquaint themselves with these minimum benchmarks.

There are a lot of young Members in the Legislature today. There are . . . and I want to give you credit, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the former Deputy Speaker, for ensuring that down below us will be facilities where Members can meet constituents, where Members can fellowship jointly and separately, where Members can meet constituents and the like. Those are minimum benchmarks.

We have young Members, the Premier being one. We have Ministers. We have Members of the Opposition who have young children, people who have grandchildren. There are certain standards that we need to make sure that our Members can come to Parliament and not be separated from their families.

Many a family has lost . . . they are playing second fiddle to their members serving their country. And irrespective of what the public might think, and how we might allow the public to think, we are all doing public service for the love of our country. And we owe it to ourselves to have and uphold these minimum benchmarks that I felt necessary to share last time. And I hold these things up because I know that . . . it's my duty to say that we need to make sure that campaign finance is put in proper perspective.

Like I said, there are many people in this country who struggle, but there are many in this country who don't. This country is to serve us all. We need to make sure that the rules that we live by are fair, and that's what these minimum benchmarks are designed to do, and if a sophisticated country like us could bypass having these regulations, shame on us.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

There being none, the House stands adjourned . . .

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: —until 20 November [2026] at ten o'clock [am].

[At 9:06 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 20 November 2026.]

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