



2025/26 SESSION
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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

12 JUNE 2026

(Sitting number 37 of the 2025/2026 Session)

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

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12 JUNE 2026
10:02 AM**

Sitting Number 37 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

Some Hon. Members: Good morning.

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

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MOMENT OF SILENCE

[In memory of Sir John Swan, KBE, JP]

The Speaker: Members, before we start the business of the day we are going to observe a moment of silence in recognition of the passing of Sir John Swan. But, for the interest of the public who are listening, I am going to also indicate that we will not include condolence remarks [for] Sir John today in our normal Condolence and Congratulatory [Speeches], because there will be a special sitting of Parliament during this period where we will use that occasion for every Member to be able to express, or those Members who wish to express.

So today we observe a moment of silence. But in line with the family's arrangements for the funeral, we will have a special sitting in that period of time. And at that occasion, not only will the current Members be able, but we are going to extend it to former Members who have served with Sir John as well, to have that opportunity to be in the House to give those types of remarks.

So, at this time, we will now observe a moment of silence and then we will move on with the business of the day. Join us in that moment of silence.

[Members rose and observed a moment of silence.]

[Timer chimed]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. The House is now in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: We will now move on with the Orders of the Day.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 15 and 29 May 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes of 15 and 29 May have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be printed as confirmed.

[Minutes of 15 and 29 May 2026 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: We received notice that the Honourable Wayne Furbert will be absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: We have three such papers this morning. The first is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs. Minister.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF BERMUDA 2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Regulatory Authority of Bermuda 2020–2021 Annual Report](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would you like to do your second one?

COST OF LIVING (ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Cost of Living \(Essential Commodities\) Amendment Regulations 2026](#) as made by the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs in exercise of the power conferred by section 10E of the Cost of Living Commission Act 1974.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The third is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF COOPERATIVE LEGISLATION IN BERMUDA

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly a report entitled: [The Proposed Introduction of Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

The Speaker: Before I move on to Petitions, I would also like to acknowledge that you see a new face assisting the Sergeant-at-Arms today. Mr. Grant is understudying the Sergeant-at-Arms at the moment, so that when we need assistance he will be available.

So, we thank Mr. Grant for making himself available this morning. [We] appreciate it.

[Desk thumping]

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have quite a few this morning.

There are 10 such Statements. The first Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of National Security.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, colleagues and the listening public.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE 2026 ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the public with a timely reminder as Bermuda enters the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season. The season officially began on 1 June and will continue until 30 November.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that much of the advice shared at the start of every hurricane season may sound familiar. Residents have heard before that they should check their shutters, prepare supplies, review their family plans, and follow official updates. That is because some messages are too important to say only once. [Hurricane preparedness](#) is one of them. We repeat this information each year because it helps families prepare, reduces confusion when a storm threatens, and supports the safety and resilience of our Island.

Mr. Speaker, each year, as hurricane season begins, we are reminded of a simple but important truth. Bermuda does not need our busy season to be affected. We only need one storm, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, to cause serious disruption to our Island. This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, commonly known as NOAA, has forecast a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season. That forecast may be welcomed news, but it must not lead to complacency.

A lower storm count does not mean there is no risk to Bermuda. It does not mean that Bermuda will be spared. It does not mean that families, businesses, schools, churches, care homes, and essential services can afford to wait until a storm is already approaching our shores before preparing.

Mr. Speaker, the message from the Ministry of National Security is clear: prepare early, prepare properly, and do not wait. The time to prepare is now, while conditions are calm, while supplies are available, and while families have the opportunity to make clear decisions.

Bermuda has weathered many storms. We have seen periods of high activity, and we have seen seasons when the Atlantic appeared quieter. But our experience has taught us that a quieter season can still produce a dangerous storm. That is why hurricane preparedness must never be treated as a last-minute exercise. Preparedness is not panic. Preparedness is discipline. It is responsibility. It is care for our families, our neighbours, and our community.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Emergency Measures Organisation, I want to assure this Honourable House that the Government's emergency management partners remain focused on readiness for the season ahead. The Emergency Measures Organisation Executive will meet on Tuesday, June 16, for their annual Hurricane Preparedness briefing. The Ministry of National Security, the Bermuda Weather Service, the Department of Communications, the Bermuda Police Service, the Royal Bermuda Regiment, the

Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, the Department of Health, the Ministry of Public Works, utility providers, and other key agencies all play an important role in Bermuda's hurricane readiness and response. Our work is coordinated through the Emergency Measures Organisation, and our decisions are guided by official information and the best available advice.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to remind the public that the Bermuda Weather Service is the authoritative source of weather information for Bermuda. When a storm threatens the Island, the Bermuda Weather Service monitors the system and provides briefings to the Emergency Measures Organisation. Watches and warnings are issued based on that official advice. Residents should therefore follow official Government and Bermuda Weather Service updates. Please do not rely on rumours, social media speculation, or unofficial commentary when making decisions about your safety and the safety of your family.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to remind residents that the Government's official Emergency Broadcast Station is 100.1 FM. The station becomes active when a hurricane is imminent and provides important public safety information and official updates. For that reason, every household should include a portable radio and spare batteries in their hurricane kit, so that they can continue to receive official information during power outages or service disruptions.

Mr. Speaker, when a watch is issued, residents should complete their final preparations. When a warning is issued, storm conditions are expected within 36 hours, and residents should follow all official guidance without delay. This includes guidance on public safety, shelters, road conditions, public services, and any other measures that may be necessary to protect life and property.

Mr. Speaker, hurricane preparedness is not only a household responsibility. It is also a community responsibility. In true Bermuda spirit, I am asking residents to check on elderly relatives, neighbours who live alone, and persons who may need help with preparations. A simple phone call, a visit, or assistance with securing a property can make a meaningful difference before a storm arrives. Businesses and community organisations should also review their continuity plans now. Staff contact lists, emergency procedures, backup systems, and communication plans should be checked before they are needed.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I urge every resident of Bermuda: do not wait for the first storm alert. Do not wait for the shelves to be empty. Do not wait until the wind begins to rise. Prepare now. Stay informed. Follow official guidance. Check on your neighbours. And let us do our part together to keep Bermuda safe this hurricane season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Good morning again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ONLINE RENTAL SCAMS AND THE PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda of the rise in [online rental scams](#) and the steps that the Ministry of Home Affairs is taking through its Consumer Affairs section to protect residents who are searching for a home.

Mr. Speaker, a home is the foundation of every family's security. A rental scam strikes at that foundation before a family ever holds a key. Consumer Affairs has received a growing number of reports from residents who have encountered fraudulent rental listings online. Some have already been deceived. And we know that this loss is rarely only financial, but rather, it carries stress, uncertainty, and the fear that the search for shelter in the home can no longer be trusted. This House has a duty to meet that fear with plain guidance and with the protection as established in law.

Mr. Speaker, the report follows a consistent pattern. Individuals posing as real estate agents, landlords, or property managers use online platforms to post listings for properties they do not control. These listings rely on stolen photographs and details copied from genuine homes. Prospective tenants are then pressured to share [personal] information, copies of identification, banking details, [and] upfront deposits, before any opportunity to view the property in person.

The Ministry confirms that these tactics are the established markers of fraud. Awareness of them is the first and strongest defence available to every resident.

Mr. Speaker, Consumer Affairs advises every resident searching for rental accommodation take the following steps:

- Treat unsolicited rental offers from unknown individuals with caution.
- Withhold money, deposits, [wire] transfers, and/or banking information from unverified persons.
- Question any listing priced [well below market value].
- Request an in-person [viewing] in every case.
- Verify the identity of any landlord, property manager, or real estate agent before sharing personal information or making any payment.
- Treat claims of being overseas, claims of being unavailable to meet, and pressure to act quickly as cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, through support from the Consumer Affairs officers, [we] have identified the common signs of a likely rental scam:

- a request for payment [before a viewing];
- a refusal to meet in person;
- contact limited to social media or messaging apps;
- advertisements that are poorly written or inconsistent;
- stock images, or photographs copied from other websites;
- an early request for sensitive personal information.

Residents should keep records of all correspondence, advertisements, receipts, and payment transactions related to any rental inquiry. Where something appears suspicious the safe course is to stop communicating, then to verify the listing independently before any further steps.

Mr. Speaker, residents are protected in law as well as in practice. Under the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978, [certain] residential properties in Bermuda remain subject to rent control. Prospective tenants hold rights under that framework, and they should understand those rights and the terms of any tenancy agreement before signing. [No housing decision should rest on an online advertisement alone.]

Any resident who believes they may have encountered a rental scam should contact Consumer Affairs and report the activity. Reports can be made by calling 297-7627, or by emailing consumers@gov.bm. Every report strengthens the Ministry's ability to identify these schemes and to warn others before harm is done.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry accepts that households across Bermuda are facing real strain in securing affordable houses. The work to widen access to that housing is led by the Ministry responsible for housing. The Ministry of Home Affairs advances its own part of that shared effort. It supports the legislative reforms and it carries the consumer protection and awareness that guard residents inside the market. Reform of the Landlord and Tenant Act is still underway as part of those legislative efforts. The Ministry will update this Honourable House on a new consultative draft in the coming month.

Mr. Speaker, affordability is structural, and the dignity of a secure home sits at the centre of it. Consumer protection is the architecture that keeps that home within honest reach. When a resident loses a deposit to a fraud, they lose more than money. A resident therefore loses confidence that the search for a home can be safe. This Government will not allow that confidence to be stolen. Through awareness, through the support of those already harmed, and through the steady protection of consumers, the Ministry will hold that line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement is also in your name. Would you like to continue with that one?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to update this Honourable House, and through it the people of Bermuda, on the [fuel and energy risks](#) the Government has identified, the steps already taken to protect Bermudian households, and the posture of vigilance with which this Government is managing a volatile global energy

environment. The public is entitled to know what their Government also knows, and to know that Bermuda's risks are being monitored with intentionality and addressed with competence.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda imports the fuel on which our electricity, our transport, and our daily life depend. That is a fact of our geography, and it means that we are susceptible to world events far beyond our shores. Since March of this year the Ministry of Home Affairs has publicly advised that it is closely monitoring the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East on global oil markets and the potential consequences for Bermuda's fuel and energy costs. Instability in the [Persian] Gulf and disruption to global shipping and energy supply chains carry direct consequences for prices at the pumps and on our bills. This Government did not wait for those consequences to arrive. We watched, we prepared, and we acted.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this Government does not assess these risks in isolation. We study how the world's most exposed and most capable economies are reading this moment, and we take their assessments seriously. The Strait of Hormuz has now been closed for months, with no clear path to resolution. The effects are no longer confined to price. Some economies are already experiencing fuel shortages, reduced flights, and factory delays. And the disruption is spreading beyond energy into fertiliser, food, shipping insurance, and other essential inputs. The Prime Minister of Singapore, leading one of the world's most import-dependent and energy-sophisticated nations, put it plainly at his country's May Day Rally this year. [Even] when the Strait of Hormuz reopens, there will be no immediate return to normal. Ports and energy infrastructure have been damaged and shipping lanes [must] be cleared, he shared. Confidence must therefore be restored. But, like Singapore, Bermuda does not face this moment from a position of weakness. We face it informed, organised, and early.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is equally aware of the international policy guidance on how moments like this should be managed. Last month, the International Monetary Fund published its guidance on responding to the global energy and food price shocks. Fiscal responses must be *targeted, temporary, timely, and tailored*. It should address vulnerable households, [and they should be] shielded with targeted, time limited support.

This Government enacted an exceptional measure in these exceptional circumstances with a defined six-month term. It is tailored because the Ministry of Finance's customs duty relief preserves the integrity of the supply chain rather than having importers absorb the losses. And it is timely also because it was issued the day before the increase which would have been the date that it reached the pump. The same discipline will govern every step that follows. Measures will be sequenced, they will be proportionate to the shock, and they will be designed to protect households without straining the public finances on which all of our protections ultimately depend.

Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, 15 April 2026, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a Retail Fuels ([Consumer] Protection Standstill) Ministerial Direction 2026, pursuant to the Regulatory Authority Act [2011] and the Fuels Act [2022]. The Direction establishes a standstill ceiling on retail fuel prices for a period of six months, through mid-October. No licensed importer, wholesaler, or retailer may charge above that ceiling. The effect was immediate and tangible.

Mr. Speaker, this protection was designed to be fair to every part of the supply chain. Alongside the Direction, the Ministry of Finance signalled that it would operate a targeted customs duty relief measure, building on the approach that was used successfully in 2022 when fuel prices were last frozen. Licensed fuel importers and retailers are not disadvantaged by the standstill and are made whole. The Government, in support of the public, will cover any verified revenue shortfall for licensed importers during this period. That is what responsible intervention looks like, and that is what our Government continues to do on behalf of [households] ensuring that they are protected and ensuring the integrity of Bermuda's fuel supply [is preserved].

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to confirm to this Honourable House that the Regulatory Authority's [Board] aligned its [retail] fuel prices with the standstill provisions, and the Authority also has committed to continued engagement with the Ministry of Home Affairs, [the Ministry of] Finance, and industry stakeholders on a clear and effective mechanism that aligns with Government policy while safeguarding the long-term reliability of Bermuda's fuel supply.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members should also understand that this is just the Government's first step. It is not the last. Awareness without action is not governance, and this Government intends to remain both aware and decisive. The Ministry of Home Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of National Security, is constantly addressing and having oversight over fuel supply security, contingency planning, and the protection of essential services.

The Government is diversifying its supply relationships and will continue to explore every responsible avenue to support the public. As further strategic steps are confirmed, the public will be updated. I will not pre-empt additional measures that remain under active consideration, but I will give this Honourable House the assurance that the work is underway, it is deliberate, it is informed by the best international evidence available, and it is coordinated across government.

Mr. Speaker, this work sits within a wider national direction. On 16 April 2026, the Ministry opened the proposed National Electricity Sector Policy [2026] for public consultation, the first comprehensive update to Bermuda's electricity policy in over a decade. In response to public requests, the consultation was extended to broaden participation. Now that the consultation has closed, we are thanking every resident, business, and organisation that participated. Those contributions are being logged, considered, and reflected in the final policy. Engagement will continue beyond the formal consultation window, because durable

energy policy requires sustained input from households, industry, civil society, and technical experts.

Mr. Speaker, the measures announced during the Budget Debate, including portable energy systems and community solar models, are aligned to this same strategy. But alignment cannot stop at Government. Bermuda's energy ecosystem, the Government, the regulator, the utility, fuel suppliers, businesses, and households, must operate in tandem. Not against one another. Not in duplication of one another. And never without the public and the public interest at the fore. This Government has made that decision, and it expects every actor in the sector to make it as well. Bermuda is small and the stakes are high for institutions to pull in different directions.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I extend an invitation to every household, business, and public body across this Island. In a growing world of technology and fuel dependence, energy consciousness is a shared national responsibility. Simple, consistent choices matter. Switching off what is not in use. Managing cooling and hot water sensibly. Choosing efficient appliances and equipment. Every kilowatt hour saved reduces a household bill today and reduces fuel Bermuda must import tomorrow. Energy efficiency is not a sacrifice. It is the most immediate contribution each of us can make to Bermuda's resilience.

Mr. Speaker, the Government knows the risks Bermuda faces. We are monitoring them with intentionality, and we are reading them through the same lens as the world's most capable governments and institutions. We have held the line at the pump, and we are coordinating across government to secure our supply. And we are building the policy framework that reduces our exposure for good. I invite every resident to act with us, because energy security in Bermuda will be built by all of us, together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement is also in your name. Would you like to continue?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GOOGLE SUBSEA CABLE LANDINGS: NUVEM AND SOL, UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on a significant milestone in our journey to secure Bermuda's place in the global digital economy.

On Wednesday of this week, Bermuda marked the [successful landing of two Google subsea cables](#), Nuvem and Sol, and the hosting of an official cable landing ceremony in St. David's. These are events that signify the continued confidence of one of the world's most consequential technology companies in our jurisdiction.

Nuvem, derived from the Portuguese word for "cloud," will connect South Carolina to Portugal. Sol, meaning "sun" in Spanish, will connect Florida to Spain. Google has confirmed that when complete Sol will be the only in-

service fibreoptic cable connecting Florida to Europe. All of this will happen through the cable landing station currently under construction in St. David's.

Mr. Speaker, as I have previously stated in this Honourable House, Google did not choose Bermuda by chance. This week's developments result from deliberate policy choices, regulatory clarity, and a steadfast commitment to positioning Bermuda as a trusted and strategic partner in global connectivity. The landing of any submarine cable represents a significant national milestone. These systems are the arteries of the modern digital economy, and Google's presence in Bermuda reflects both confidence in our jurisdiction and the strength of our long-term vision, initiated with the enactment of the Submarine Communications Cables Act 2020.

This legislation is a clear and deliberate step by this Government to position Bermuda as a key player in global connectivity. It established the submarine cable protection zone and a clear approval pathway, with applications determined within 60 to 75 business days because this Government completed the environmental groundwork in advance. That is regulatory clarity in practice.

Mr. Speaker, this milestone also delivers on the Bermuda Economic Development Strategy 2023–2027, announced by the Ministry of Economy and Labour in June 2023, which names subsea cables among the sectors best suited for foreign investment in Bermuda. The strategy named the sector, and the legislation opened the door. This week the investment landed.

Mr. Speaker, the significance of these developments extends far beyond infrastructure. What has transpired this week puts Bermuda at the intersection of connectivity between North America and Europe. It ultimately enhances

- digital resilience, through added redundancy and network diversity;
- economic diversification, expanding Bermuda beyond its traditional sectors;
- innovation capacity, enabling improved access to cloud computing and artificial intelligence; and
- jurisdictional attractiveness, strengthening global confidence in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, jurisdictions around the world have shown what a cable landing can become when it is matched with deliberate policy. Singapore now hosts 26 subsea cable landings, and its digital economy contributed 18.6 per cent of GDP and 214,000 technology jobs in 2024. Ireland turned its position as a transatlantic connectivity hub into a data centre sector that added an estimated €7.3 billion to its economy, per Trinity Business School, 2025. And at the European end of Nuvem sits . . . We also see that connectivity helped to attract US\$10 billion through artificial intelligence investment, announced in [November] 2025.

Each of these jurisdictions paired connectivity with regulatory clarity, skills, and energy planning. The lesson is [consistent]. Connectivity opens the door. Policy walks the economy through it. Bermuda is applying that same discipline sized to our Island and shaped by our people. Beyond

infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, Google's relationship with Bermuda is delivering tangible benefits [through]:

- Investment in STEM education, and digital literacy, including support for Bermuda College, the Bermuda Zoological Society and St. David's Primary.
- Programmes, such as Grow with Google, through which 500 scholarships have been awarded to Bermuda residents for career and digital skills training, with access through Bermuda College until 31 December 2027, ensuring Bermudians are equipped with future-ready digital skills which are validated through professional certification.
- A commitment, alongside the St. David's Island Historical Society, to assist restoration for Annie's Bay and its heritage trail, preserving the history and unique maritime heritage of St. David's.
- The fostering of a collaborative model between the Government, the private sector, and our regulators, demonstrating how to deliver complex, high-value national projects.

Mr. Speaker, for the people of Bermuda, these benefits are practical. Two cables interconnecting on our Island mean that when a cable is damaged anywhere in the Atlantic traffic can be rerouted, and our families, schools, hospitals, and businesses can stay connected. The international evidence on connectivity is clear, and the International Telecommunication Union found in 2020 that a 10.0 per cent increase in fixed broadband penetration raises GDP by an average of 0.77 per cent. Bermuda's gains will come through resilience, through skills, and through the new industries this infrastructure invites.

Mr. Speaker, these cables carry opportunity—opportunity to expand Bermuda's role in the subsea cable industry. Together these two cables establish a resilient "Digital Exchange Port" that anchors Bermuda as a critical international switching point for global data, cloud services, and the future of AI. Bermuda has become a key place in geography for technologies that will underpin the next stage of global economic growth. Opportunity to attract adjacent industries that depend on secure, high-capacity connectivity, and opportunity to build an ecosystem that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is fast becoming a digital gem; an Atlantic hub at the crossroads of international data flows.

Mr. Speaker, what we witnessed on Wednesday in St. David's was the intersection of local heritage, the installation of high-tech infrastructure, and Bermuda's future at the forefront of the next era of global digital growth. Wednesday's ceremony brought together Government, industry, and community stakeholders to celebrate progress and to reaffirm a shared commitment to ensuring Bermuda derives lasting value from Google's confidence in our remarkable Island.

I extend my thanks to Google, its partners, our regulators, technical teams, and the Bermudian workforce whose collaboration made this milestone possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA, IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. Owen Darrell: I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update regarding the [implementation of ridesharing](#) in Bermuda, which officially launched on 10 June 2026 as part of the Government's broader transportation modernisation initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of regulated ridesharing has been designed to complement Bermuda's existing public transportation network and taxi industry by helping address long-standing transportation gaps, particularly during peak demand periods, evenings, weekends, holidays, and major events. From the [outset], this Government has been clear in its approach: taxis first, rideshare when needed.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the initial implementation phase is progressing positively.

To date, the TCD [Transport Control Department] has received approximately 79 applications for ridesharing permits. Of these, 19 applicants have successfully met the requirements for approval. At this stage of the process, approved applicants are required to remit payment for their permit, licence plates, decals, and operator's badge. Of the approved group, approximately 17 individuals have completed all required payments.

Mr. Speaker, the remaining 16 applicants are currently at the pre-approval stage. This [stage] requires applicants to complete final requirements such as vehicle inspections and purchasing the necessary enhanced insurance coverage. In addition, approximately 20 individuals have now obtained a Public Service Vehicle Licence, enabling them to be considered for participation in Bermuda's ridesharing programme.

Mr. Speaker, taxis continue to play a vital role in providing transportation for our residents and visitors. As such, it remains important to monitor participation within the sector. As of 5 June 2026, Mr. Speaker, 72 of the 108 previously unlicensed taxis had renewed their licence and returned to service.

Data shared by a despatch stakeholder indicates that transportation activity accelerated following the ridesharing legislative announcement. Year-over-year growth increased from approximately 34 per cent prior to the legislation announcement to approximately 52 per cent thereafter, suggesting increased participation across the

transportation sector and improved transportation availability for residents and visitors.

Mr. Speaker, this reflects precisely what this Government intended—a regulated, balanced transportation model that improves service availability for the public while continuing to prioritise and support Bermuda's taxi industry.

All ridesharing operators remain subject to Government oversight, including PSV licensing requirements, vehicle inspections, insurance requirements, and operational standards established by the Transport Control Department and the Public Service Vehicle Licensing Board.

Mr. Speaker, as previously communicated, the ridesharing framework includes a maximum of 150 permits during this phase. Given the public interest shown to date, applications will continue on a rolling basis and will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis until the permit cap has been reached. The Ministry, TCD, and industry stakeholders will continue to monitor implementation and support operators as the programme expands across our Island.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of this launch is especially significant as Bermuda enters the busy summer tourism season, including Carnival in Bermuda and other [major] events that generate increased transportation demand across the Island. This initiative helps ensure Bermuda is better positioned to move residents and visitors safely, efficiently, and reliably during periods of peak activity.

The Ministry will continue to monitor implementation closely, engage with stakeholders, and make operational adjustments where necessary to ensure the initiative continues to serve the broader public interest.

Mr. Speaker, transportation reliability remains one of the most important aspects of the visitor and resident experience alike. This initiative is another important step in how we modernise Bermuda's transportation system and improve accessibility and reliability for the public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. How are you?

[No audible response]

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARENTING

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today before this Honourable House to provide an update on the efforts of the Department of Child and Family Services to [strengthen parenting capacity](#) within our community through parent coaching certification and parenting skills development initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the department's Mirrors programme, has placed a strategic focus on parenting skills and co-regulation skill-building for the current year. These efforts are designed to support both the clients of the Department of Child and Family Services and the broader community through a series of prevention-focused parenting workshops and a Parent Coaching Certification Programme. This certification programme will equip identified staff members with specialised parent coaching credentials in 2027, enhancing our capacity to support families across the prevention and intervention continuum. The Parent Coaching Certification training will commence in August 2026 and conclude in April 2027.

Mr. Speaker, this work is informed by data. Findings from the department's Family Strengths and Needs Assessment indicate that parenting skills and coping and mental health skills continue to represent the greatest areas of need among families receiving services. Last year, parenting skills emerged as one of the highest identified needs among families served by the department. This trend continued into the first quarter of this year, with 72 per cent of the 57 households assessed demonstrating a need for parenting skill development. Coping skills and mental health needs ranked second, with 70 per cent of households identifying challenges in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, in response to these findings, the department, through its Mirrors programme, will implement a comprehensive 28-week Parent Coaching Certification Programme. Delivered through prevention services, this initiative will strengthen community-based support while also enhancing intervention services provided to department clients. The programme will develop a cadre of certified parent [coaches] equipped with evidence-informed strategies to support parents in building stronger relationships, improving communication, and fostering healthy child development.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the Parent Coaching Certification Programme, the Mirrors programme will partner with the Youth Mental Health Plan and Bermuda's schools to expand access to parenting support throughout the community. Through these partnerships, the Keys of Excellent Parenting workshops will be delivered within school communities and sporting clubs, creating greater opportunities for parents and caregivers to strengthen their parenting skills, build healthy family relationships, and develop practical strategies that support the social and emotional well-being of children and young people. By bringing these workshops directly into community settings where families naturally gather, we aim to reduce barriers to participation, increase accessibility, and strengthen the network of support available to Bermuda's parents and caregivers. The Keys of Excellent Parenting workshop series will run from September 2026 through June 2027, providing ongoing opportunities for engagement and learning throughout the academic year.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, the Mirrors programme will measure and evaluate the impact of these initiatives quarterly to ensure that they are meeting the needs

of families and contributing to positive outcomes for children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, the department's Family Preservation Team is also strengthening its specialised response to families affected by abuse and neglect through targeted professional development. Identified staff members have received training in the Nurturing Parenting Programme, an evidence-based approach designed specifically for families involved in child abuse and neglect cases. This training will enhance the department's capacity to support parents and caregivers in developing healthy parenting practices, strengthening attachment and family relationships, improving self-regulation, and reducing risk factors associated with maltreatment. This specialised training complements the broader parenting capacity-building strategy by ensuring that staff are equipped to respond effectively to the varying levels of need presented by families across both prevention and intervention services.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the parents who have reached out for support. Asking for help is not always easy. However, these parents have demonstrated courage and commitment by recognising the importance of building a network of support for the growth, development, and well-being of their children. We thank them for placing their trust in the services and community supports available to them.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Department of Child and Family Services, and the Ministry, I extend sincere thanks to our community partners and members of the public for their ongoing engagement and commitment to safeguarding Bermuda's children and youth. As the saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child. Together, we can continue building stronger families and brighter futures for Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP, ESTABLISHMENT OF

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the establishment of the [Electoral Reform Working Group](#), an important step in advancing the Government's Comprehensive Electoral Reform Programme.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months, the Government has undertaken extensive public engagement, consultation, research, and policy development on a broad range of electoral reform matters. Through town hall meetings, stakeholder discussions, youth engagement sessions, written submissions, feedback from overseas

Bermudians, candidate surveys, and operational reviews, valuable perspectives have been gathered from across our community.

The Government has consistently maintained that electoral reform must strengthen our democracy, improve public confidence in the electoral process, and ensure that our electoral system remains fair, accessible, secure, and fit for purpose.

As Honourable Members will be aware, the establishment of the Working Group represents the next step in this process, following the completion of extensive consultation, research, and policy development. Today, I can confirm that the Electoral Reform Working Group has now been formally established.

Mr. Speaker, the Working Group has been created to provide independent review and practical scrutiny of the Government's electoral reform proposals before legislative drafting is finalised. Its role is to assess the evidence gathered to date, review policy proposals, identify risks and safeguards, and provide recommendations to support the next phase of reform.

This work will focus on four key areas

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Senator Lauren Bell, JP, will serve as Chair of the Electoral Reform Working Group, and Ms. McKenzie[-Kohl] Tuckett will serve as Deputy Chair.

The full membership of the Working Group is as follows:

- Senator Lauren Bell, JP, Chair
- Ms. McKenzie[-Kohl] Tuckett, Deputy Chair
- Ms. Juanae Crockwell
- Mr. Theo Wolffe
- Mr. Max Blakeney
- Mr. Trew Morris
- Ms. Tenia K. Woolridge (Parliamentary Registrar)
- Ms. Jahdia Spencer
- Mr. Geoffrey Faiella
- Mr. Michael Anthony Charles Smith
- Dr. Lana Talbot

Mr. Speaker, these individuals have been selected not only for the experience and expertise they bring, but also because, collectively, they represent a broad cross-section of Bermuda's community. The Government was deliberate in seeking a Working Group that reflects a range of professional backgrounds, generations, perspectives, and lived experiences. Mr. Speaker, that balance is intentional, because electoral reform affects every Bermudian and must reflect that range of experience.

Members have not been appointed to advocate for any political party, organisation, or special interest. Rather, they have been appointed to apply their judgment, experience, and constructive scrutiny to the proposals before them and to help ensure that any reforms ultimately brought

before Parliament are practical, effective, and capable of commanding public confidence.

The Working Group will receive consultation findings, policy papers, operational assessments, comparative research, and other supporting materials. Particular attention will be given to issues including absentee voting for overseas students, campaign finance regulation, voter registration, Election Day administration, and options for strengthening electoral governance, including consideration of an Electoral Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of absentee voting emerged as one of the most frequently raised electoral matters during and following the last General Election. Concerns were expressed by Bermudians studying overseas who wished to participate in the democratic process but faced barriers to doing so. The Government has listened carefully to those concerns, and the Working Group will examine practical and secure options to improve voter access while preserving the integrity and public confidence that are fundamental to our electoral system.

Mr. Speaker, I have already met with members of the Working Group as part of an initial orientation session, where the timeline and expectations for this work were discussed in detail. There is a clear understanding among members that this review must proceed with focus, discipline, and urgency.

Mr. Speaker, the Group has been established as an accelerated review exercise and is expected to complete its work within four weeks, with provision for a short extension if required. This phase is not about restarting consultation. It is about testing, refining, and finalising the direction of reform based on the work already completed. Upon completion, it will submit a recommendations report to support Cabinet consideration and legislative drafting.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has been clear that electoral reform should be guided by evidence, informed by practical experience, and tailored to Bermuda's unique circumstances. The establishment of this Working Group reflects that commitment.

I would like to thank Senator Bell, Ms. Tuckett, and all members of the Working Group for their willingness to serve. Their contribution will play an important role as we continue the work of strengthening Bermuda's democratic institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I remain committed to bringing the necessary electoral reform legislation before this Honourable House in September 2026, and I look forward to receiving the Working Group's recommendations in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

the Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

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

THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF COOPERATIVE LEGISLATION IN BERMUDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lay for the information of this Honourable House the Government's [Proposed Introduction of Cooperative Legislation](#) in Bermuda.

This policy proposal represents an important step in our ongoing efforts to diversify Bermuda's economy, empower our people, and create new pathways for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, cooperatives have a proud history in Bermuda. From the Friendly Societies that emerged after emancipation, to institutions such as the Bermuda Credit Union, Bermudians have long embraced the principles of collective action, mutual support, and shared prosperity. However, despite this history, Bermuda currently lacks a modern legal framework specifically designed to support and regulate cooperative enterprises.

The absence of such legislation has limited the growth and development of cooperatives as a [viable] business model. Existing legislation was not designed to accommodate enterprises that are democratically owned and controlled by their members and operated for their collective benefit. This policy proposal seeks to address that.

Mr. Speaker, the Government recognises that cooperatives can play a significant role in building a more resilient and diversified economy. They offer opportunities for workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, residents, and communities to pool resources, share ownership, and participate directly in economic development.

The proposed framework will establish cooperatives as a distinct legal entity in Bermuda and create a dedicated Registrar of Cooperative Societies to provide oversight, registration, and support functions. The legislation will be grounded in internationally recognised cooperative principles and best practices while being tailored to Bermuda's unique economic circumstances.

The policy also outlines opportunities for cooperative development in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, housing, renewable energy, technology, and sports organisations. These sectors present opportunities to strengthen local ownership, reduce dependency on imports, promote innovation, and create new economic opportunities for Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is not simply about creating a new legal structure. It is about expanding economic participation. It is about empowering communities. It is about providing Bermudians with another tool to build wealth, create jobs, and strengthen economic resilience. The Government's vision is to position Bermuda as a leading small island jurisdiction in the development of cooperative enterprises. By establishing a modern legislative and institutional framework, we can foster a culture of shared ownership, democratic participation, and sustainable development.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, particularly its

Economic and Cooperative Development Unit, along with local stakeholders and international partners, whose contributions have helped shape this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, the laying of this policy proposal marks the beginning of an important journey. I commend this [policy] proposal to this Honourable House and look forward to working with Members, stakeholders, and the wider community as we advance this important initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Health.
Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide an update to this Honourable House and to members of the public on the [status of the Ebola virus](#) disease and its relevance to Bermuda.

On May 17, 2026, the World Health Organization declared Ebola virus disease a public health emergency of international concern due to ongoing outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. This designation reflects the seriousness of the situation, given the potential for international spread, and the need for cooperated and coordinated global surveillance, prevention, and response efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reassure this Honourable House and the public that there are currently no confirmed cases of the Ebola virus disease in Bermuda. While the risk of Ebola being imported into Bermuda remains low, the Ministry of Health remains vigilant and is taking every necessary precaution. The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit continues to actively monitor global developments and maintain measures of preparedness, including disease surveillance, deploying early detection protocols, coordination with the Customs and Immigration Departments, and collaboration with international public health partners to ensure that we are ready to respond swiftly and effectively should the situation in Bermuda change.

Mr. Speaker, Ebola is a serious and often fatal viral illness. The virus spreads through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person, or through contaminated surfaces or objects such as bedding or clothing. It can also be transmitted through contact with an infected animal in the affected regions.

Symptoms typically appear between 2 days to 21 days after exposure, most commonly within 8 to 10 days. Early symptoms include fever, severe headache, fatigue, and muscle pain. These symptoms may progress to vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, and in some cases, unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Mr. Speaker, if any individual develops symptoms consistent with Ebola and has a relevant travel history, they must not present themselves directly to a health care facility

without prior notice. Instead, they should contact the Emergency Department at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in advance, provide information about their symptoms and travel history, and follow the medical guidance provided. This approach, Mr. Speaker, allows the health care teams to implement appropriate infection prevention measures and protects both patients and medical staff from undue exposure.

Mr. Speaker, members of the public are advised to avoid non-essential travel to areas experiencing active Ebola outbreaks. For those who must travel, strict adherence to public health precautions is essential. These include, Mr. Speaker, the following:

- practicing frequent hand hygiene by washing using soap and water or alcohol-based sanitisers;
- avoiding contact with sick individuals;
- avoiding contact with blood or bodily fluids or contaminated surfaces;
- refraining from handling animals, particularly bats or primates;
- avoiding consumption of raw or undercooked meat, including bushmeat;
- avoiding participation in burial practices that involve direct contact with the deceased; and
- practicing safe sex.

Mr. Speaker, travellers returning from affected areas will be screened for symptoms upon arrival by Port Health and Surveillance Officers. Additionally, a travel questionnaire has been introduced as an enhanced screening [measure] to support border protection. Individuals will be monitored for 21 days, starting from the day they left the affected area.

If symptoms develop during this period, I implore individuals to

- immediately self-isolate;
- ensure that others do not come into contact with their blood or bodily fluids or any objects that may have been contaminated;
- avoid public gatherings or public transportation; and
- call the Emergency Department for medical advice.

Mr. Speaker, while the current risk to Bermuda remains low, preparedness is essential. The Ministry of Health, through the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide timely updates. I encourage all residents to remain informed, to follow official guidance, and to rely on reputable sources of information.

Mr. Speaker, through awareness, preparedness, and [responsible] action, we can ensure the continued safety and well-being of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Would you like to proceed with your second one?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform Members of this Honourable House and the listening audience that this month of June will be observed as [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\) Awareness month](#); a time for community engagement and renewed commitment to action. Throughout the course of the month the Department of Health will host several activities designed to promote HIV awareness, education, testing, and stigma reduction.

Mr. Speaker, this month is a time when we honour the strength and resilience of long-term survivors who have lived with HIV for decades, including those who have lived with the virus since birth. Thanks to medical advancement and research, HIV is a chronic health condition that can be effectively managed with early diagnosis and consistent treatment. With proper care and community support, people living with HIV are leading long, healthy, and productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, as of December 31, 2025, it is estimated that 306 persons are living with HIV having been diagnosed in Bermuda, corresponding to an overall prevalence of approximately 0.5 per cent. Between 2011 and 2025, the number of new HIV diagnoses has been generally low, with fewer than 10 diagnoses reported annually. In 2024, there were eight new HIV diagnoses, followed by only three in 2025. However, Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, there has been a concerning shift, with four new HIV diagnoses reported in just the last four weeks. This sudden rise underscores the urgent need to intensify awareness efforts, expand access to testing, and strengthen prevention strategies to flatten the uptick in transmission. We must act quickly, compassionately, and collectively.

Mr. Speaker, getting tested is one of the most important steps anyone can take to be certain of their HIV status. Knowing this information is empowering, allowing individuals to make the best choices for their health and the health of their partners. Many people with HIV may not show symptoms for years, but testing allows individuals to take control of their health and protect others.

Mr. Speaker, the [available] antiretroviral therapy can reduce the level of HIV in the blood to a point where it is undetectable. When a person reaches and maintains an undetectable viral load, they cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners. This is a powerful message of hope and a cornerstone of modern HIV prevention. This is also why getting tested and starting treatment early is so incredibly critical to the health of an individual, to ending the spread of the virus entirely.

Mr. Speaker, certain factors can increase vulnerability to HIV transmission, including limited access to health care, lack of information, and social or economic barriers. Our focus must remain on supporting all individuals at higher risk, without stigma, judgment, or exclusion. That is why at the Hamilton Health Centre free and confidential testing is available. I strongly encourage everyone, regardless of age, background, or perceived risk, to get tested regularly.

Mr. Speaker, while anyone can be affected by HIV regardless of age, gender, or background, certain behaviours increase the chance of transmission. These include the following:

- having unprotected sexual contact;
- sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection supplies;
- using alcohol or drugs, which can impair judgment and lead to less safe sexual choices; and
- having other sexually transmitted infections can make it easier for HIV to enter the body.

HIV can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding, without treatment.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognise that while some groups are more frequently affected due to various social factors, HIV does not discriminate, and we must continue to break down the stigma around HIV. Stigma continues to be one of the biggest barriers to prevention, testing and treatment. But normalising these conversations starts at home with parents and children having age-appropriate, honest discussions. It continues in schools, where health education can equip young people with the knowledge to make informed decisions. And it must extend into our broader national dialogue, where openness replaces fear and misinformation. We must foster a national dialogue that is open and honest. Providing our young people and the population at large with accurate information about safe sex and healthy relationships gives them the tools they need to protect themselves and others.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of the month, the public should expect to hear more from the Department of Health via the HIV testing campaign, public service announcements, weekly pop-up information tables, radio interviews, social media advertisements, and educational videos on HIV testing and awareness. There will be several opportunities to continue the conversation, educate our population, and get more information on testing.

Mr. Speaker, as we observe HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month, let us each commit to:

- getting tested and knowing our status;
- practicing safe sex, including correct and consistent condom use;
- seeking accurate information from trusted sources;
- supporting those living with HIV with dignity and respect; and
- replacing fear and stigma with facts and compassion through open and honest conversations.

Mr. Speaker, together, we can build a Bermuda where HIV is no longer stigmatised, where prevention is prioritised, and where every person has access to the care they need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

The Speaker: The next item is Premier's questions. And just for the listening audience, whenever Parliament sits on the second Friday of any month, when we get to Question Period there's an addition that we do before Question Period, which is Premier's Question Period. And that is an allotment of 30 minutes prior to the actual Question Period for that given date. So, this morning we have the Premier's Question Period.

The first question for the Premier this morning is from the Opposition Leader.

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, would you like to present your question now?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to [you]—

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Ben Smith: —and to the listening audience.

QUESTION 1: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, TRAVEL IMPACT ON BERMUDA

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Premier, considering that the Government is asking for Bermudians to give support to full membership in CARICOM, can the Honourable Premier confirm whether the Government has obtained formal advice from the United States or independent legal experts regarding any potential impact on Bermuda's existing travel privileges, including visa-free access, US pre-clearance arrangements, or any other changes that could impact travel for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I want to say good morning to you, Mr. Speaker, good morning to all Honourable Members, and I hope that everyone is having an enjoyable start to the holiday weekend.

Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that the Minister who has responsibility for CARICOM has set out all particular matters. There is a forthcoming White Paper, and all of the matters that the Honourable Members may have asked about, or questions for, will be covered inside of that particular White Paper.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, thank you, Mr. Speaker.
So, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier saying that he has not had any interaction or conversation with the US on what impact full CARICOM membership would have on travel for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is no expected impact on travel for Bermudians, as we have said at many particular points in time. But I will repeat the statement that I made before, and if there is a question, I will just let the Honourable Leader of the Opposition know that the Government is following its timetable that we set out in order to make sure that we bring these particular matters through a consultative process and bring them forward to debate in this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Supplementary or second question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, considering how public this conversation on CARICOM is, would the Premier agree that it would be important to have a conversation with US representatives to make sure that even this conversation openly, publicly, would not have an impact on the travel arrangements for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would say that from hearing the Honourable Member from the Opposition, we know the familiar tactic of what they are trying to engage in. It is the same tactic that they tried to engage in as associate members when they were in their former incarnation in 2003. The reality is, we know this, we get it, we understand, it is the modus operandi for the Opposition.

We are following a process, Mr. Speaker, a process of where we are laying out all of the particular information, and the questions of which are being asked are coming, my opinion, from a misinformed position, because there is no impact from this particular level. But if the Honourable Members want to ask that question, if that was part of their submission of which they made to the consultative process, all those matters will be canvassed in the forthcoming White Paper.

The Speaker: Second question?

QUESTION 2: SYSTEMIC FAILURES AT HOSPITAL LEADING TO SERIOUS HARM OR DEATH

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

Mr. Speaker, [to] the Honourable Premier: The former Chief of Emergency Services, Dr. Edward Schultz, who served Bermuda for three decades, recently submitted a comprehensive message to the public of Bermuda. And in that he talked about the Bermuda Hospitals Board and warned about overcrowding, patient boarding, bed shortages, so on. And in it, he made mention that potentially those conditions had led to adverse outcomes and even death.

Can the Honourable Premier assure the Honourable House that no patient has suffered serious harm or loss of life as a result of the systemic failures identified by Dr. Schultz?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, what I certainly can say is that the matters that were raised are matters that the Honourable Minister of Health has addressed fully in consultation with the BHB. I'm happy to certainly share with Honourable Members in this House and people who are listening the work that has certainly taken place.

We were informed of Dr. Schultz's concern. There was work that was going on prior to the publication of the letter. There were persons who noted and understood, and I think that the public record will reflect the work of which the Bermuda Hospitals Board has done. I think it's also important to recognise the progress which has been made since the Bermuda Hospitals Board has set a new clear target for six hours from ED boarding, and that is from the decision to admit . . . to transfer a patient that they have had enhanced discharge protocols which have taken place.

And I think it's particularly important to note that [median] boarding time has fallen from what was a very high space of 50 hours down to 20 hours. It's a 60 per cent reduction. Emergency Department overcrowding has eased as a result, supported by the enhanced discharge processes. And the reality where ED times start now is that admitted patients wait a median of five hours before decision to admit, total median time of the ward transfer about 24 hours. It does remain above the target, but most patients who are admitted and treated and discharged [are] within a median of four hours.

I think it's important to note the reason why this is the case, Mr. Speaker, and the reason why this is the case is the challenge which is faced with long-term care. But the way that you address that challenge with long-term care is to make sure that there is additional investment that is being made.

And what is this Government doing? BHB is adding 30 long-term care beds at MWI [Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute]. It's part of the broader strategy to address the need of approximately 365 skilled nursing facility beds by 2035.

We know there's the new build in the West End as well. There are other measures that are taking place, the expansion and the additional beds that have been created at King Edward Memorial Hospital in the general wing to ensure that we are continuing to press forward on this.

So, it is a live issue. The Minister of Health has spoken on this. The new board of the Bermuda Hospitals Board is fully engaged on this particular matter, and [is] happy to continue to update Honourable Members or the Minister of Health is happy to update Honourable Members as this is certainly something within her remit that she has particular close attention being paid to.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do agree that there seems to have been progress going forward since that report was published. But, Mr. Speaker, my specific question is, Has the Government put in an internal investigation . . . sorry, an independent investigation to ensure that the families that are grieving have an understanding whether there was loss of life due to the issues that now are being fixed?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Minister of Health is on record that an independent investigation has been launched [at] a board level and that is in the public domain.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary or third question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Second supplementary.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that the Premier is saying that that independent investigation is backward-looking so that it is taking into consideration the potential that lives were lost or people were hurt during the period prior to the changes being implemented that the Premier referred to in his original response to me.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that it is an independent investigation that has been commissioned by the Bermuda Hospitals Board, and we will look into all the matters that have been raised.

The Speaker: Okay.

Third question?

QUESTION 3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, IMPACT ON BERMUDIAN WORKFORCE

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

Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Premier inform this Honourable House whether the Government has completed, commissioned or scheduled a Bermuda-specific assessment of how artificial intelligence may affect the

Bermudian labour market, including administrative, clerical, financial, insurance, professional and public service roles as future demand for skills, hiring and workforce retraining continue to be assessed by the changes of artificial intelligence?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: There were a number of things at the very beginning of that commission, et cetera, et cetera, so I will just try to update the Honourable Member where he is. I think that I've spoken on this publicly. I think that is a matter that is inside the public domain.

I think at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast this year I said the Government is in the process of commissioning. I'm not entirely certain where it is. I know that it is with an economist who specialises in labour and those types of technical issues. It is something that has been done by the Ministry of Finance. I can get back to the Honourable Member on that, but I know that it is the direction of travel. I know that information was sent over to the Financial Secretary, et cetera, so I will sincerely . . . I will get an update.

But on the basis of the question that is being asked, yes, it is important that we examine these issues. But it is not just looking at those things. It's also the Minister who has responsibility for cybersecurity, the Minister of National Security, and also government persons are working to make sure that cybersecurity defences are being beefed up on matters that are related to new artificial intelligence threats. So, there are a number of things that we are doing on this aspect.

[I am] happy to work with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, if there are committees that want to be formed, to talk about these things and do it, because I think it is important that we have a broader general discussion on what the future means and the transition and change. I think it's also important to note that Bermuda will certainly have opportunities inside the artificial intelligence landscape with the cable landing that we are celebrating this week as well.

The Speaker: First supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Mr. Speaker, considering the answer he just gave, would the Premier let us know whether there is an undertaking to have a cross-ministry committee formed as this artificial intelligence will impact all the different ministries in different ways? And if that is the case, whether there will also be an invitation for the Opposition to maybe be part of these different committees?

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, the only space that our system of Government allows the Opposition to take place on these particular matters would be if there is a Parliamentary Committee that is being formed.

On this particular matter, insofar as the work and the research that is going to be done, that is not going to be something that is going to be cross-party. If there is something that happens in regard to seeking feedback thoughts from industry or others, then the Opposition, as a matter of course, from a consultative perspective. But if we are commissioning a report that is being done professionally by an economist, I'm not going to specify how that is going to be done. I'm going to leave it to the professionals to specify how we get it done to make sure we get the best answer.

But as I referred to earlier, we are perfectly happy to work across the aisle on these particular issues. And not just across the aisle, but certainly with the private sector and the third sector on these particular matters because it is important. There is a great age of transition that is happening, and it is important to know that Bermuda is playing an important part and role in that, whether it is a subsea cable landing, whether it's matters related to space. There was a big IPO [initial public offering] today. We have space matters that are taking place here in the country.

The Government came into office in 2017 saying that we would advance our matters and standing on matters related to technology. We are seeing some of that progress beginning to manifest, and we are pleased with that. And we are happy to work across the aisle where it is appropriate.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

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

Mr. Speaker, considering how important an impact this might have on our community, would the Honourable Premier potentially request a Parliamentary Committee to be formed in order for there to be cross the Parliament so that we can look at the importance this subject will have on the future of Bermuda?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to discuss those particular matters. I wouldn't say that right now that would be the clear focus. I think we should probably . . . it's probably a better time to have that done after a board is commissioned and to look at those particular matters.

But as I said, this is a conversation that will continue. And if there are persons who have various thoughts, ideas, or questions, then they are more than welcome to raise them. The Government is engaged on a number of things. I do know that even next week there is a delegation of government employees travelling to a conference in the United States to continue to develop skills and training and development on making sure that we can better use these particular artificial intelligence tools to help and assist the delivery of government services.

I think we all recognise there is space for improvement. And we are going to do our best to make sure we continue to get better.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

That concludes the questions from the Opposition Leader.

Premier, you have questions from MP Swan.
MP Swan, would you like to put your question?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, thank you, and good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: GOOGLE'S SUBSEA CABLES IN BERMUDA

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been talking about the ceremony at Annie's Bay yesterday marking the arrival of Google's subsea cables in Bermuda. Many of them are asking how a project of this scale can be landed here. Could the Honourable Premier share that story with this House and what it means for our Island?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

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

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER *[Misleading]*

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I think the Honourable Member may be just misguiding the House and Parliament here, and the public. How we got to this point with the cable was in a Statement many, many, many months ago when it came here, the deal. So why is he asking a repetitive question when it has already come to the House—

An Hon. Member: And today.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —and today?

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's already in the public domain.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr.—

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Premier—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Premier . . . I'm going to guide your response, meaning that in a normal form of question, if a question was put, the response would have been, it's already in public domain.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would note that there are a number of questions that the Honourable

Member did ask. The answers were clearly in the public domain when asked about matters related to the Bermuda Hospitals Board and other things. But that is fine, Mr. Speaker. Remember, this is Premier's Question [Period], so I will be guided

The Speaker: I know you're guided.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will be guided. I understand. Don't worry. I will make sure the Honourable Members know that I will not take a long time.

And, you know, if there are points of order, hopefully we can get through them very quickly. But I think, Mr. Speaker, what is important to note is that this is a reflection of how you set policy, how you have a goal, and how you have to work through it. It takes a while, and I think that is what's important.

There are a number of things that the Government is engaged in. Economic development, economic diversification is not something that happens overnight. This is something that we realised before we came into office when we said we would set up a structured process for examining economic development opportunities and to find a way to put that forward.

It was the vision of our platform in 2017 to create a technology space at South Side. We, you know, went through a number of various things. But this subsea cable opportunity was identified as something that was important. In 2019, we passed the legislation. In 2020, we passed the regulations. We went out to market and we were looking for partners. And the reality is Google is the first. There are more that will come. But the connectivity that is happening from one of the largest countries in the world is going to have a significant impact on this populace.

So, the Honourable Member can tell his constituents that their children can look forward to better Internet connectivity and a space where Bermuda can play a role in artificial intelligence, influence, et cetera, because the data pipes that are flowing into Bermuda will be significantly more than are flowing into other islands that may be remote, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Premier, now that the project is bearing fruit, give this House a sense of what Google is now saying about Bermuda's role in this project?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that the ceremony was attended yesterday, even by Members of the Opposition.

I didn't see you there, MP Cannonier, though. That's your stomping grounds, St. David's.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I got you.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important to note is that Google recognises the importance of their investment in Bermuda. The investment itself is significant. And from their particular perspective they said that Bermuda . . . they are actually surprised with how connected it is.

So we had . . . this is the first time we have been able to meet the Vice President of [Google Global Networking], who is responsible for building out the entire Google network. And he said, even on a chart that he showed about our significant Internet rates that are taking place in Bermuda, which have almost doubled in the past two years. And that is just a reality that, whether it's artificial intelligence, whether it's our businesses here, whether it's the traffic, whether it's the work that's happening on disaster recovery and other types of things, that it is significant. And they recognise that as an international financial centre they want to play a part of our technological investment in the future.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have a second supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead, MP.

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

Given the current situation, would the Honourable Premier advise of any other benefits this partnership with Google could provide for Bermudians?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important to recognise that in this relationship Google is committed to also helping the third sector. So, there are going to be 500 scholarships that are going to be offered to Bermudians under the Grow with Google programme. Those are matters that are related to cybersecurity, digital analytics, digital marketing. And the Bermuda College is the first institution outside of North America to join in that initiative. So that is certainly something that should be celebrated as a part of this transition.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, Google has partnered with the Bermuda Zoological Society to support STEM education for more than 8,000 Bermudian students every year that will bring new technologies into our classrooms and into the field, helping our young people to become, not just learners, but active environmental stewards for our Island. And that is the benefit of this partnership, Mr. Speaker, something that should be celebrated. I'm sure that

that investment and that partnership is welcome across this entire House.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

Premier, the next Member who has questions for you is MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your questions?

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

Good morning, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

QUESTION 1: CORRECTIONS REFORM: ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACTION

Mr. Robert King: Will the Honourable Premier please explain why, despite repeated inspection findings, operational reviews, and public concerns regarding safety rehabilitation outcomes and institutional culture within the Department of Corrections, Government has not sought the appointment of an independent United Kingdom corrections adjudicator, inspector, or oversight team to monitor implementation of reforms and report publicly on progress?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, in another place, I think the Minister who has responsibility for this has set out the Government's strategy on this. The Opposition may agree or disagree, but that is the strategy the Government is following and progressing against. And the system of government that we have is that accountability mechanisms can happen inside of this parliament.

We've published a report. I think it's important, because governments don't often publish reports that are critical of government work. But the Attorney General, who sits in another place, the Minister responsible, said we want to put it in the open so we can be held accountable for the work that is happening to progress and to make things better.

There is going to be additional investment that is brought to bear, but due to the economic stewardship that this Government has made, we are going to be able to make sure that investment is coming. And Honourable Members will hear about that in the near future. But I think it's important to note that it is in the public domain. We did commission an external review. That review, once and all, has been published outside of the critical security information that was redacted. And we are going to press ahead with that.

And the Honourable Member will have plenty of opportunity when reports are given to ask questions, or parliamentary questions, to see what the status of the implementation is, and to hold through the traditional accountability mechanisms of the legislature which we have in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary, MP?

Mr. Robert King: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that the issues as identified in the report by the UK Home Office highlighted long-standing concerns for over 10 years, it would suggest that government agencies, departments, ministries, staff, et cetera, who were in positions of authority to address the problem, did so to the best of their ability and the situation got worse with those same persons. That is the reason I'm asking for independent oversight and reporting on the findings of the experts, because, as the Premier said, he leaves it to the professionals to make decisions that they are experts in.

So, I'm asking, Is the same consideration being given to the Department of Corrections where the situation has gotten to the point where lives of officers are at risk, lives of staff are at risk, lives of inmates, incarcerated persons, are at risk, where they live, in their homes, in the community? That is the current state that exists in the Department of Corrections. And to suggest that current interventions and practices are achieving the aim is misleading this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier, that was a long question, but—

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm not sure if I got the question, Mr. Speaker. But I will do my best to . . . I'm not sure of the question.

I mean, the Honourable Member clearly has a view. I have stated what the Government's view is. But let me share with the Honourable Member that I actually visited the Westgate Correctional Facility this week. I actually spoke with the Commissioner of Corrections. I actually spoke with the Commissioner of Police. And the matters that are related to security of officers are being taken very seriously. We know that there are matters which we cannot discuss that are before the courts. But these are items that are taken seriously.

But it's not just the Corrections. Because we have made statements, publicly and otherwise, about the work that the Government is doing to protect public officers wherever they are. And so, this is something that is particularly important.

So, I accept and understand the Honourable Member's view. But the important point is that we have laid out our plan and direction. We have made it public. We have admitted where we have come short. And the public and this Honourable House can hold us accountable for delivery on the things that we said we are going to progress.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

What specific measures have been put in place? What actual resources? What strategic plan? What time-lines have been put in place to address these critical concerns? [It is] all well and good to suggest that the people, the personnel, the resources are currently in place. It's not working.

What is the Honourable Premier doing differently to address those concerns, now understanding it's a crisis?

Thank you.

The Speaker: He can get an answer for you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the report was published a few months ago. I'm certain the work is taking place. If the Honourable Member wants [to ask] specific questions, I'm happy for him to either submit it to the person who speaks for Justice in this Honourable House, or for them, their colleagues that sit in the other place, to go ahead and ask those questions directly to the Minister responsible, who I think they did ask those questions when the Minister gave the Statement and tabled the report.

What I will tell the Honourable Member is that this is an important issue. I appreciate his passion, and I sincerely hope [through] the regular accountability mechanisms that exist in the legislature that he'll continue to press on this issue. That is the way that our system of government works. The Government has laid a report. We have said what we are going [to do going] forward, and it is up to this legislature to hold the Executive accountable for delivering on those items.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP King, for yours.

Premier, the next question comes from MP Campbell.

MP Campbell.

QUESTION 1: MIDDLE EAST OR AFRICA CONTRACTS RESULTING IN ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO BERMUDA

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it was recently reported that the Government has spent approximately half a million dollars on its Middle East and African consultant, Ms. Hefti. I would like to ask the Premier, Other than free digital and leadership training for locals, can the Premier advise of any contracts or agreements that have been signed with any country or entity from the Middle East or Africa that have resulted in an economic benefit to Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will happily state all the things that have taken place. There is certainly the Bermuda Coders Initiative, of which we have seen that that has been seen as a benefit.

We do know that there is the Hope Initiative for global youth empowerment, which has been led by Minister Tinee Furbert. There's a Global Energy [Efficiency] Alliance founding membership, which has been led by Minister Lightbourne. There's a 2024 Partnership Agreement, Government Exchange Experience Programmes, details already provided, which the Government Exchange Leadership Programme as well.

There's at least \$1 million of in-kind technical capacity building based on the figures for the cost of the programme. In addition to that, the engagement inside the Middle East was the thing that brought the Digital Finance Conference here and the work that was taking place, because that came from an investment conference that was taking place inside the United Arab Emirates [UAE]. And so, we have seen the things that have happened there. We know that there are matters that are related to the Arab Fiscal Forum, the heightened recognition that Bermuda has had from the Arab Fiscal Forum, which then translated into a first-ever invite to IMF pre-meetings, where technical officers, and others, were able to engage.

There have been MOUs that have been done with Ghana, the Bermuda Airport Authority, and Dubai [Air Navigation Services]. MOUs on Public Finance Management with the UAE to help and to assist. Amendments to the Double Taxation Agreement with the [Kingdom of] Bahrain to make sure there's additional investment.

Several ongoing and different stages of discussions that are taking place. Bahrain Sovereignty . . . [Bahrain] Data Sovereignty Initiative, Logistics and Connectivity Cooperation Certificate as well. In addition to that, advance—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You want me to give you answers, do you not?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He has his answers for you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He has got his answers in front of you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am so happy that the Opposition thinks I know what they are going to ask, and I'm clairvoyant.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I mean, I saw the Honourable Member who asked a question a few hours ago on Front Street, so I'm happy that we're able to engage on—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm happy that we're able to continue on that aspect.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to continue to engage. Just like we set up an office in Brussels, just like we have something in the Middle East, just like we have something in America. The next space that the Government of Bermuda will go is to make sure that we have a representative office covering Asia as well, because it's important.

An Hon. Member: CARICOM.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, we're going to get CARICOM as well. That's why.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognise as this jurisdiction continues to grow in importance and relevance, if we do not do the work to ensure that people know what we are doing to make the relationships, and to go ahead and foster those things, then we will be challenged. And so, our Brussels office representative is doing an amazing job. Our London office representative is doing an amazing job. Our DC Office representative is doing an amazing job. And our Middle East and North Africa and Middle East and Africa representative is doing an amazing job as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. And long may it continue.

Can the Premier advise how many Bermudians have signed up and received the free digital and/or leadership training?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I don't have those particular numbers off the top of my head. I will see if they are inside of my comments. I do know that the Government's Leadership [Development] Programme enabled 20 Bermuda public officers, providing high-level leadership training at no cost.

It's also involved travel to the UAE and others, things that were here. There was also an accelerator programme that was offered which helped and assisted in the upgrade of the government website, the new website of which we see as well. There were 71 Bermudian educators who participated in the Digital Educator Global Academy and the Digital Skills Upskilling Programme, which is free and available to all.

But on the specific questions, if the Honourable Member wants to submit a specific written question, we can happily get those detailed answers for him, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplementary, MP?

Mr. Vance Campbell: No, I don't. I'd like to thank the Premier for his answers.

The Speaker: Okay.

There are only a short few seconds left on the clock, but MP Dill, would you like to put your question?

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

Mr. Speaker, last year, one of my constituents was hit with excessive fees from the bank that were exceeding their credit limit and I believe it was—

Some Hon. Members: Aah.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Unfortunately, the clock has run out on us there. Sorry about that.

For the listening audience, we had 30 minutes for the Premier's Question Period. The Premier's Question Period has now concluded.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We will now start the 60 minutes for the questions that will be generated from today's matters, whether it be written questions or today's Statements. And I'll start by saying that we have quite a few written questions and all required written answers, which means there will be no oral response to any of those questions.

There were some 12 questions which have supplementary questions to them as well, and I'm going to go through the list of 12 and the Members asking can indicate whether they have received their answers.

I have been informed that answers have been supplied to 10 of the 12 questions, and the other two will be forthcoming at the next sitting. So, I'll switch the clock now to the 60 minutes, and then we will go to questions from Statements after that.

But the first written question this morning was from MP DeCouto to the Minister of Finance, and I believe those questions will be supplied at our next sitting, Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Which question specifically, Mr. Speaker? I'm sorry.

The Speaker: MP DeCouto had the questions from . . . there were three questions on the Order Paper. It's on the Order Paper . . . those three questions there. We haven't received a response to those yet. We are assuming they are for the next sitting.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they were sent. They were sent late; I accept that. But they have been sent. So,

I know they have been sent. I saw the copy of the email out for them again, but they have been sent.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: And also, there were questions that were carried over from last week. They were part of that as well.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

MP DeCouto, your questions . . . we'll get them to you before . . . in the course of the day. They have been forwarded.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, FINANCIAL SERVICES/REPUTATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENTS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please provide for this Honourable House details of any formal economic, financial services, or reputational risk assessment undertaken by the Government regarding Bermuda becoming a Full Member of CARICOM?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please identify for this Honourable House all financial services stakeholders, industry bodies, international business representatives, insurers, reinsurers, and professional organizations formally consulted by the Government regarding Bermuda becoming a Full Member of CARICOM, and provide a summary of any risks, concerns, recommendations, or conditions raised during those consultations?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Given that Bermuda's international business success relies on regulatory certainty, jurisdictional reputation, and confidence from global markets, will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please confirm for this Honourable House whether Government has conducted an assessment comparing the economic benefits of Full CARICOM Membership against any potential impact on Bermuda's existing international business relationships, and if so, will the Minister table that assessment?

The Speaker: The next [questions] are from MP Campbell to the Minister of Housing. And the Minister of Housing has already informed me that they will be forthcoming for next week. Okay? Thank you.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING HOUSING INITIATIVE BENEFITS

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House any procurement arrangements, construction material supply chains, or housing initiatives that would become newly available under Full CARICOM Membership that are not available under associate membership?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether Government has conducted any analysis demonstrating how Full CARICOM Membership would reduce the cost of construction in Bermuda?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House any specific construction materials that could be expected to become less expensive as a result of Full CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: The third question is from the Opposition Leader to the Junior Minister of Education.

Opposition Leader, have you received your answers?

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

QUESTIONS: SUCCESSION PLANNING INITIATIVES WITHIN MINISTRY/DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[Carried over from 29 May 2026]

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide a list of all senior leadership positions within the Ministry of Education and Department of Education for which the substantive holder has announced retirement, resignation, or departure effective during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 academic years, together with the anticipated vacancy date for each position?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide details of all formal succession planning initiatives undertaken within the Ministry of Education and Department of Education from 2020-2026?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide the number of senior education leadership positions filled in an acting capacity with the length of time for each acting officer, from 2020-2026?

The Speaker: The second question is also from the Opposition Leader to the Junior Minister of Education.

You received those answers?

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

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME, QUALIFICATION, PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENTS

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all the specific education programmes, qualifications, or institutional partnerships that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing CARICOM Associate Membership?

Hon. Ben Smith: For each programme or opportunity identified, will the Junior Minister please state whether Bermuda currently has access through existing regional arrangements, including participation in institutions such as University of West Indies, and if not, what specific barrier full CARICOM membership would remove?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry conducted any analysis demonstrating measurable improvements in student outcomes, access to education, or cost efficiencies as a direct result of full CARICOM membership, and if so, will the Junior Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Pearman, you have questions for the Junior Minister.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes. Received, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS, JUDICIAL COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT RISKS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Will the Junior Minister please identify and list any legal frameworks, dispute resolution mechanisms, or judicial cooperation arrangements that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Mr. Scott Pearman: For each mechanism identified, will the Junior Minister please state whether Bermuda already has access through existing legal agreements or international conventions, and if not, what barrier full membership would remove?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Will the Junior Minister please confirm whether the Government has conducted any legal analysis outlining the implications, obligations, or risks associated with full CARICOM membership, and will the Junior Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP King, you have questions for the Junior Minister.

Mr. Robert King: Received with thanks.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, MEASURABLE BENEFITS FOR CORRECTIONS, REHABILITATION, PRISON MANAGEMENT, PRISON OFFICER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Mr. Robert King: Will the Junior Minister please identify for this Honourable House any corrections, rehabilitation, prison management, or prison officer support programmes that would become newly available under Full CARICOM Membership?

Mr. Robert King: Given the recent concerns regarding prison safety and threats against prison officers, will the Junior Minister please explain to this Honourable House how Full CARICOM Membership could offer opportunities to improve conditions within Bermuda's prison system?

Mr. Robert King: Will the Junior Minister please confirm whether the Ministry has identified any measurable correctional benefit that is unavailable today under the Associate CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Robinson, you have questions to the Minister of Home Affairs. Have you received yours?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Yes, as indicated. They have circulated, so I'm assuming he would have them.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, DETAILED ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING REDUCTION IN FOOD COSTS IN BERMUDA

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with a detailed analysis demonstrating how full membership in CARICOM would reduce the cost of food in Bermuda, including specific categories of goods and projected price reductions?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what specific barriers currently prevent Bermuda from importing lower-cost food from CARICOM member states, and how

would full CARICOM membership remove those barriers?

The Speaker: Opposition Whip, questions to the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport]. We indicated they have been received. Have you—

[No audible response]

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS OF TOURISM MARKETING INITIATIVES, CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES OR REGIONAL BRANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all specific tourism marketing initiatives, cultural exchange programmes, or regional branding opportunities that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether for each initiative identified, Bermuda already participates in or has access to similar regional or international tourism platforms, and if not, what barrier full CARICOM membership would remove?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has conducted any analysis demonstrating potential for increased visitor arrivals, tourism revenue, or cultural sector growth as a direct result of full CARICOM membership, and if so, will the Honourable Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Fahy, likewise, you have questions to the Minister of Economy and Labour. We indicated they have been received.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House all the opportunities that would become newly available to Bermudian small and medium-sized businesses under Full CARICOM Membership that are not currently available today?

Hon. Michael Fahy: For each opportunity identified, will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House what legal, regulatory, or commercial barrier currently prevents a Bermudian business from establishing operations in a CARICOM member state?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House if the Ministry identified any specific sectors in which Bermudian businesses would gain a competitive advantage under Full CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: Good.

MP Richardson, who is not here, had questions to the Minister of National Security. We have indicated those have been circulated and received.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, IDENTIFY ALL POLICING INITIATIVES AND MEASUREABLE CRIME REDUCTION BENEFITS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House all policing, intelligence-sharing, gang intervention, and crime reduction initiatives that would become newly available to Bermuda under Full CARICOM Membership and are not already available today?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: For each initiative identified, will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House what measurable reduction in violent crime, gang activity or antisocial behaviour does the Government expect to achieve with Full CARICOM Membership?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has identified any policing benefit that cannot already be achieved through existing bilateral relationships with the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, or regional law-enforcement partners?

The Speaker: MP Tucker, you have questions to the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. We have indicated they have been received.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMME EXPANSION

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please outline for this Honourable House how full membership in CARICOM could expand educational, training, and youth mobility opportunities for Bermuda's young people, particularly through regional youth

programmes, scholarships, and skills-development initiatives offered within the Caribbean Community?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House how full CARICOM membership could support Bermuda's long-term planning for our aging population, and whether any comparative analysis has been conducted with non-CARICOM alternatives?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please outline for this Honourable House how full CARICOM membership could provide access to regional programmes that support vulnerable families, including those facing financial hardship or housing instability?

The Speaker: Thank you.

And MP Linda Smith, your questions to the Minister of Works. We have indicated they have been received.

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes. Thank you.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ASSESSMENT OF BENEFIT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all specific environmental programmes, climate resilience initiatives, sustainability projects, funding opportunities, or technical assistance that would become newly available to Bermuda under Full Membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has conducted any assessment demonstrating measurable environmental or financial benefits from Full CARICOM Membership and if so, will the Honourable Minister table that assessment?

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether Bermuda is currently excluded from any major CARICOM environmental programme because it is an Associate Member rather than a Full Member?

The Speaker: All received. Thank you, Ministers, for providing the written answers, and Members for indicating they have received them.

That will now take us to the questions [arising] from any Statements that were given this morning. And the first Statement that has indication of questions is the Statement by the Minister of Home Affairs regarding her Statement on the fuel security. And the first question is from MP Linda Smith.

MP Smith.

QUESTION 1: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is, Does the Minister have any substantive information which could inform or suggest that Bermuda's fuel supplies for jet fuel, electricity generation and retail fuel or any other petroleum products importation may be at risk, given the Statement this morning?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: No.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: No. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, the Opposition Whip also would like to put a question to you.

Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just looking for the page. But the Minister mentioned Government will cover any verified revenue shortfall for licensed importers. And I guess my question is, In light of the past when that shortfall happened, was that shortfall also to be covered with interest as well?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry of Finance led the initiative that actually was also done during the fuel freeze in 2022. And the importers received compensation for what they would have lost had the cost at the pump increased.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But was that cost including interest? That was the question.

The Speaker: Minister, he was just asking as an additional piece to his first question about interest being included.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Just a point of clarification. Would the importers receive additional interest from the Government for . . . added to the cost that they would have been able to receive? I am not clear.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sure, sure, sure, sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to clarify.

If a business takes a loss within a month and then it is covered six months later by Government, most businesses would incur, or put on a charge of interest because it is a loss of money that should have been in their coffers receiving interest.

And the reason I am asking that is because I recognise even with electricity, when BELCO offered help during COVID-19, the amount of money and loss that they took there, we are paying that money back with interest. So, the precedent is there. I am just trying to qualify if this also applies to the fuel industry as well.

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I appreciate the clarification from the Honourable Member.

This price fuel freeze was agreed with the Ministry of Finance, recognising that there were areas that it could be enhanced this time in support of the fuel importers alongside the communication provided by the Regulatory Authority. The Ministry of Finance has refined that agreement and the period for which the reimbursement will take place to the fuel importers.

So, it is not anticipated that there will be a six-month delay as the question initially presented and suggested, but rather they will be able to be compensated so they do not incur any losses.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary or a new question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I guess I am a bit confused because the question talks about a shortfall, which is a loss. So are we saying that . . . I am trying to understand. It already is a shortfall, which is what was stated in the Statement.

So, is the Minister saying that that shortfall will be paid within that month? We are still not getting to the point. Is it going to be interest? Has the wholesaler, the importer requested . . . let me put it that way. Has the wholesaler who will take a loss requested that interest be paid on any loss that they take, shortfall that they mentioned in their Statement? Maybe that is more clear, clearer. Have they stated that?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The importers are not intended or anticipated to receive or experience a loss. On behalf of the consumer, the Government has capped the cost of fuel at the pump, and so any incurred and verifiable cost for that fuel will be reimbursed to the importers. So, the freeze relates to the consumer, but the difference will be given to the importer.

The Speaker: There are just two supplementaries. Do you want to do a third question . . . a second question, rather?

QUESTION 2: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question. Yes, that is still not getting to the root of it. Time will pass. I don't know what that time is, if the lapse is a month, two months, three months. But in my experience it is months.

So, with that shortfall, again, this is money that they would have received and been able to invest, whatever the case may be. I am just trying to understand if there is any agreement that, like I said with BELCO, that if that money is paid back by Government, whether or not it incurs any interest on it. That is it. I haven't heard an answer. Yes, no, or we don't know quite yet. Maybe it is that. I am not trying to . . .

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance is going to assist here.

Hon. E. David Burt: I think that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, who has answered the question already in stating that we have learned from what we have done. But I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, for Honourable Members to recognise, and for the listening public to recognise, that while in the United States and other places they are facing significant escalation in fuel prices, this Government acted to freeze fuel prices, just like we did in 2022, the last time that there was a fuel price spike. And so, what we have learned from this—

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

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member is not [answering] the specific question at hand. He has gone on about the whole . . . the Statement already states that there are national and international issues with fuel.

All we are asking is, is there going to be interest incurred or expected on the money to be paid back for what they say is a revenue shortfall? I don't want to hear all the rest of that stuff. Answer the question.

The Speaker: I think he was getting there, Member.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no. He wasn't getting there. We already heard that from the Minister in her Statement.

The Speaker: Premier, Premier, can you be a bit more precise for this Member?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely amazing that they don't want to hear the answer.

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

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: The reality is—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait. Wait, wait, wait. Members, Members, Members, Members.

Premier, I think he wants to hear the answer. He just wants to hear it in less words.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that the way that these things are done is you must make sure that appropriate context is provided. And as the Minister of Finance, I want to . . . and I'm going to get there.

The reason why I went back to what we did before is lessons were learned. And the Minister of Home Affairs did say that we have improved the mechanism this time around. And she did say that she does not believe that there is going to be a need for that because the delays that were experienced last time were not. Now, if there is, and there's a conversation to be held with the importers, we will do that. But the Minister of Home Affairs said we've improved the system, and there is not the expectation that that will be necessary.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary still or third question? Supplementary? Third question?

[No audible response]

QUESTION 3: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Aah, whew. So, is the Finance Minister, then, in conjunction with the Minister of Home Affairs, admitting that in the past, there was no real loss to the . . . there was no real savings to the public when it came to fuel because the price was held, but it still had to be paid back with interest. So, we just pushed the payback time down the road.

You may have had a stay on the fuel price, but you still had to pay it back, but then you had to pay it back with interest. So, are the Premier and the Home Affairs Minister saying they learned from their lessons before, that they took a loss, plus interest, on what was done before when it came to fuel and staying the price?

An Hon. Member: So, the taxpayer pays anyway.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, the taxpayer is paying—plus.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's not . . . that's true.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes. I thank the Honourable Member for his question, and he's certainly seeking to mislead the House in terms of the framing of the questions. We never suggested that there was an increase, or a greater financial strain to the public. But rather, on behalf of the public in 2022 the Government issued a freeze at the pump. And again in 2020—

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

The Speaker: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I am not misleading anyone. I'm seeking clarity. And the Premier has already gotten up and stated they learned from their lessons.

So, maybe I'll be more specific. What were the specific lessons, financially, that you learned prior to this point?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We're seeking clarity because we're not getting an answer.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He's admitting . . . I'm asking a question about interest, and he's admitting, *Oh, well, we learned our lessons.* He's already admitted.

The Speaker: Okay. I will do two things. I'm going to assist you in . . . That piece was a new introduction of the third question, possibly.

The Minister was on her feet trying to respond to the first question, the question that was on the floor. I will allow that one to go as a supplementary after she responds.

Do you want to continue your answer, and then you can take the . . . ?

No, no.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The Minister will finish answering the question, and then you can ask the second piece as a supplementary there.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: So, as I shared with the Honourable Member, and also this Honourable House, the Government in 2022 issued a fuel freeze at the pump on behalf of the consumers, and again in March of this year another freeze took place which was effective in April of 2026. That

freeze did not incur an additional cost to the public, and any consumers . . . any importers, rather, would have any verifiable cost to import fuel reimbursed by the Government.

The Speaker: Your third question about lessons learned—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: —would you like that now?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering the answer that was just given of lessons learned, How late was it that Government paid the loss back? At what point did they pay that loss back when they froze the prices?

The Speaker: You mean, in what happened in 2022?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes,—

The Speaker: And—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —in 2022 and in 2023.

The Speaker: Well, I'm going to assist again in that that may be something [where] the Minister will have to get the information back to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's fine. Yes, that's fine.

The Speaker: I don't know if she'll be carrying . . . if the Minister would know that information offhand.

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

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Because I want to make sure I got it right.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: What is it?

The Speaker: I was trying to help you out . . . I was trying to help you out that time. But . . .

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Okay. I'm assuming we have exhausted the questions at this time.

Minister, that's the end of questions for you on that Statement.

Mr. Robert King: Mr. Speaker, I just have a supplemental question.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: I do.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Understanding that the Government is seeking to assist the community by offsetting the cost, how much money has been allocated for this relief, or whatever label is going to be used? How much money has been set aside to offset the cost to the consumer?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This price freeze was in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance for a six-month period. The Government and the Ministry, alongside the Ministry of National Security, are continually monitoring the risk that fuel supply has to Bermuda in step with the Regulatory Authority who is the body who is over the fuel sector in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Well, the first question wasn't answered because the question was, How much money has been allocated for this? What was said was not an answer to that question. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is particularly painful, but I'm going to try again. This is not the first time we have done this. There are Statements; there are matters related to this. There is not a question of how much is allocated.

What we are doing is we are reducing the customs duty that is charged, and the price changes on a monthly basis. We are doing it for six months. And when we find out how much that does cost, we will make sure that we bring this to the House. It will be reported. This is the way it was done previously.

Customs duty revenue was predicted to be \$232 million this year. With this reduction, clearly it is not going to make it to \$232 million. It's the exact same thing that happened in 2022. Granted, the Honourable Member was not in the House at that time. It's the exact same thing that happened in 2023. This is nothing new.

But what is important, Mr. Speaker, is the persons who are listening recognise and understand that this Government acted quickly in their interest to ensure that they were protected from price increases at the pump. And if we had not acted, they would have been paying more out of their pockets.

That is what we do, Mr. Speaker. That is the history of this Government taking care of numerous matters in dealing with the people of this country.

The Speaker: All right.
No further supplementaries?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: The time on that question has been exhausted. Everybody has asked their question.

The next Statement that has questions is the Statement by the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport] on the implication of the rideshare. And the Opposition Whip would you like to put a question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I almost forgot I had a question.

QUESTION 1: RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA, IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Minister, good to hear the Statement about more taxis on the road. It's really, really interesting to see that that's . . . I don't know if it is a direct result of ridesharing, necessarily, but it is good to see.

How long is this process taking to get an actual rideshare on the road itself? What has been the experience with the . . . I think you said there were 19?

[Crosstalk]

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

I note the language used by the Honourable Member from the other side say, *interesting*. I would use a different word to say it's very *impressive*—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I like that.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —that the Government could put—

Hon. E. David Burt: I like that one.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —this system in place and help modernise transportation and . . . and—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and increase transportation options for tourists and locals alike, especially at a time when we are seeing more visitors come to this country for events that the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport are putting on.

But to answer his question, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the team that has been working diligently to get this ridesharing across the Island across the line. This team is made up of many technical officers, many stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

And to answer the question directly as far as how long it has taken, I think the Honourable Member from the other side can do the math quite clearly that we just recently brought this legislation to this place and another place. We also brought the regulations to this place just a couple of weeks ago. And in such a short bit of time, Mr. Speaker, we can see that on Wednesday there were 10 rideshare rides that have happened. Yesterday there were 25 that have happened.

So, we are on our way to increasing transportation options on the Island. So, what it has taken . . . it has only taken a matter of weeks, because we closed registrations on 20 . . . May 14th, I think, Mr. Speaker. And here we are on June 10th, and we have rideshare vehicles on the road. So, I would say the entire process takes no more than two to three weeks, Mr. Speaker, from start to finish.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.
Supplementary?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. *Most impressive*.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering that we now have—

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay, go ahead. Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question, sorry.

The Speaker: Second question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sorry. Yes, I started off [saying] *most impressive*, since he loves those flattering words.

I thought it was just interesting, the numbers. I was trying to figure the numbers out, but he clarified them just now. So apparently there are 10. I think to qualify, it is 10 on the road?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm looking at them. [There are] 10 on the road, did you say?

The Speaker: No, I think that was 10 rides. He referred to the number of rides that were used yesterday and the day before—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: All right.

QUESTION 2: RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA, IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, my question, the second question is, What day or date did we get the first ridesharing on the road?

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

And I appreciate the Honourable Member from the other side asking that question because I was a little disappointed that we did not do more communication around it. So, I'm so happy that I can announce on the floor of the House of Assembly that it was with much joy and excitement, Mr. Speaker, that the first rideshare vehicles did pick up their first passengers on the previously announced date of June 10, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: The 10th?

The Speaker: June 10.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Is there a second supplementary or a new question?

New question?

No more?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'll leave it there.

The Speaker: Okay.

Thank you, Members, for that.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. MP King would like to put a question to you.

MP [King].

QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARENTING

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

Understanding that 70 per cent of clients required mental health and coping skills, why is Government focusing on parenting certification programmes rather than expanding direct mental health services, family counselling, [and] therapeutic interventions instead?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I read in my Statement.

[Laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, can I read again what was in my Statement? It's not—

The Speaker: Let me . . . let me—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I can't answer that question because that was not in my Statement.

The Speaker: Let me lend some clarification.

Member, your question should be based on what was contained in the Statement.

Mr. Robert King: Correct.

The Speaker: The Minister is saying that was not part of today's Statement, so if you can address—

Mr. Robert King: Okay. What I'll do is I'll rephrase the question, Mr. Speaker.

The point is, in the Statement that the Minister made, it was speaking about parenting certification programmes, the Mirrors programme, et cetera, to address the mental health needs and also the coping skill acquisition as it relates to parenting. What we do know [is] that these are services which would be considered secondary services to primary treatment and intervention for the root causes of those identified problems.

So, the question is really speaking to, Why is the focus, as was stated, on these secondary services versus primary risk need service delivery?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make sense out of that question. What are we referring to when we are speaking to primary and secondary?

The Speaker: Clarification.

Mr. Robert King: Adverse childhood experiences which will result in conduct disorders which will result in criminal attitudes and beliefs developing. Right? Which will then have impact on memory and learning, education, behaviour, social interaction, et cetera. Potential drug use, mental health issues, et cetera.

So, the very things that the Minister is talking about, that parenting certification, those workshops, that is secondary service delivery that is not going to address the underlying root causes. And what we do know is that there is a serious need for primary services for that population.

The Speaker: I'll just remind you . . . Member, I'll just remind you that you have a training background that allows you to understand maybe different languages than the layperson understands. So, you may need to make sure you are bringing your question in a format that everybody else, who has not had that professional background, follows.

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

The Department of Child and Family Services conducts a survey to the parents who we support every year. And part of that survey comes back to let us know where they are finding the most difficulty.

And they report that they are having most difficulty with coping strategies, particularly as it relates to behavioural concerns with their children and also mental health concerns. The Department of Child and Family Services has counselling services that they do support families and children, particularly as it relates to coping support and mental health services. But we also support families also with additional private mental health support if that is so indeed needed.

Also, I just want to highlight and thank the Family Centre as well who also provides a free service for families and children for mental health services. So, there are providers out there providing those support systems for our families and our children.

With the parenting programme, Mr. Speaker, it is very important. Very important. Parenting does not come with a handbook. Any parent would know that. And it is a challenging job if you are not getting proper support or education, or support from supportive families or friends or organisations. And so, it is important that we train persons in our community in our services, such as DCFS, to know how to approach these to help parents with this information. And also, through the programme of Mirrors, which runs an excellent programme, because I've been a part of it myself, in providing parenting workshops as well, to help parents to know how to use their language to talk to children, how to support parents through that challenging but also positive time of parenting.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are supports that are out there to support parents. We are thankful for this programme. Our parents need constant and frequent opportunities to support them through their parenting experiences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

What benchmarks will be utilised to determine whether these programmes are working or not? And who will provide oversight? Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to the specific benchmarks, but I know that Mirrors does an excellent job with collecting data and statistics as it relates to the programming that they put out to our community. So, I did mention in my Statement that the data will be collected, and I am willing to bring forward what those benchmarks come back as when we complete this programme for the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary and then that'll be it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: The question is, When is the start date for this programme to roll out? The Minister might have mentioned it, but I didn't record it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The Parenting Coaching Certification Programme will start in August of 2026 and conclude in 2027. The parenting workshops will start September 2026 and will go through June of 2027.

The Speaker: And that brings a conclusion to questions for your Statement, Minister, thank you, and Member.

The next Statement that has questions this morning [was by] the Minister of Health.

Minister of Health, we have questions on your first, or both of your Statements. But on your first Statement, MP Pearman would like to put a question to you.

MP.

QUESTION 1: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister of Health for her presentation today and her Statement on the concerns regarding the Ebola virus. And in particular, I thank the Honourable Minister for highlighting the fact that there will now be travel warnings to those who will be travelling to jurisdictions where the outbreak has occurred. And I also thank her for clarifying in her Statement that a process is being developed for how those travellers will return and be monitored. And I think it's important for the public to hear what was said there.

My question is just in relation to those who may be incoming from those same jurisdictions. I didn't hear anything in the Statement about the consideration being given to those incoming travellers. And my question more specifically is, What consideration is the Ministry giving to those incoming travellers in terms of any restrictions that are or will be imposed? Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable and Learned Member for his question. I wish I could say we have never experienced something similar to this before, but we have. So Port Health will operationalise a travel questionnaire similar to the one that was required during COVID-19, so all individuals will be required to provide that information prior to arrival in Bermuda. It is hoped that they will be able to do it electronically.

Those persons who do not have access to electronic smartphones, et cetera, will be provided it upon landing. They will complete it. They will indicate whether or not they have any symptoms, as well as whether they have

returned within the last several weeks from one of the impacted jurisdictions.

In the event that they do indicate that, yes, they have been, and/or, yes, they are exhibiting symptoms, similar to what we did during COVID-19, those persons will be isolated until Port Health officials can come and assess them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, supplementary. I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister of Health for that answer. That is clearly not a bad thing; that's a sensible precaution. One might ask whether or not another more stringent precaution would be to prohibit those people from going through our gateway cities to actually arrive here.

What steps, if any, are being considered around communication from those jurisdictions, US, UK, Canada, about the travellers coming? For example, I'll give an example. Will we know in advance if someone is coming from Congo, Uganda, et cetera, on a British Airways flight from those representatives in the UK in advance of landing? What considerations are being given around that?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you for that question. If I am understanding it clearly, we will not know in advance. We do get the manifest, but of course, the person could be coming directly from the UK, having two weeks prior come from an infected area. So the actual questionnaire is what we will be using to determine whether or not that individual has come from an impacted area.

And then, in addition, with respect to further announcements . . . remember, Bermuda is, fortunately, still ranked low. There's no transmission, and we are still on the low radar. We will continue to monitor the situation through epidemiology and surveillance. If the circumstances change, then we'll do more announcements with respect to our communications with those persons travelling from the UK. But we are at a very low risk.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Same topic, but second question.

In terms of the procedures that you identified that will be adopted if and when we have a patient with Ebola that arrives in Bermuda, can you give us . . . you say it's a low risk, and I would agree with you, it probably is a low

risk. Can you just give us a little bit more clarity around . . . excuse me.

To be specific, in your Statement, you indicated that it would be for the person who was feeling the symptoms to sort of self-regulate. And it would be a questionnaire. Will that questionnaire be reviewed by the Immigration people on arrival?

What's the sort of time frame that you envisage and how that will work practically?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you. The questionnaire is provided to the traveller enroute. Alternatively, if the person does not have access to a smartphone, they will be provided with the questionnaire upon arrival. It will be completed, and again, it's similar to the ones that we had to do during COVID-19. *Where have you travelled in the last "X" number of days? Have you experienced any of the following symptoms, et cetera, et cetera?*

That information is provided when they enter the airport as well as when they enter Customs and Immigration. In fact, we had a meeting last week with Customs, Immigration, and the Ministry of Health and Port Health to remind them of the processes that we will be adopting.

Upon arrival to Bermuda, that information is provided to . . . Who comes first, Customs or Immigration? Whichever one comes first. That information is provided. In the event that—

An Hon. Member: Immigration.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Immigration.

In the event that there is an indication on the questionnaire that says that the person has travelled from one of the impacted areas in the last "X" number of days, and/or alternatively they are experiencing any of the following symptoms, that person will immediately be taken to a . . . I don't want to say holding area, but a private area. Port Health will come and assess that individual to determine whether or not that person needs to have any further isolation, et cetera.

It's a similar process to what we did during COVID-19. It's not our first rodeo. However, again, we are still ranked very, very low with respect to this.

And WHO has just said public health of international concern. They haven't even said that it was anything higher than that. However, notwithstanding that, we are certainly watching the space to ensure that we control our borders as best as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Third question.

The Speaker: —third question.

QUESTION 3: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much for those very helpful and informative answers in relation to incoming passengers.

Going to the Statement and to your travel warning, if I can call it that, travel caution or travel warning, to outgoing Bermudians or residents who are going to be travelling to those areas, how does the Ministry envisage the communications efforts and publication of that warning? Obviously, you have given it today in your Statement in the House. How do you envisage that that will be broadcast to the general public to a greater degree so that people are aware in making their plans?

Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we will continue ongoing communications. We have actually designated an individual who is working in the Ministry of Health to assist with respect to that because you can appreciate that we do have a population of individuals who live in that region, as well as Bermudians are well-travelled. So, no doubt, Bermudians will be travelling to those regions.

So in addition to the precautions that we've indicated this morning to Honourable Members [and] the public, epidemiology and surveillance along with DCI will continue communications to provide members of the public with information as it relates to, (a) avoiding those areas if possible, but (b) what they should be doing to protect themselves and the community when they return.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Honourable—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, supplementary.

I thank the Honourable Minister for that answer. Is any consideration being given to inviting members of the public who are travelling to those areas to pre-notify before they travel so that the Government and the Ministry will be aware at least of a handful of those who do comply with that request? [That] these are potential people to keep an eye on.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I thank the Honourable Member for that suggestion. It may very well be envisioned by epidemiology and surveillance already, but I will bring that to their attention this afternoon. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, that brings a close to that Statement. However, your next Statement also has questions from the same MP.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question regarding the Minister's second Statement?

QUESTION 1: HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister for Health for her presentation to this House this morning on HIV, observing HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month.

You know, a very important reminder that this significant illness which has been with us for many decades and indeed seems to be better managed by the medical community than it was when it first came out or we were made aware of it in the 1980s and 1990s, et cetera. However, it's concerning for the Minister to tell this Honourable House that we have seen four cases over the last four weeks. And that's something I think we can all be concerned about.

My questions again are about publication of this important point. How does the Honourable Minister envisage that this will be communicated more broadly to the public other than by the very helpful and sensible Statement given today?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you for that question, Mr. Speaker.

June is HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month, so in addition to hosting an event on June 1 representing HIV Day, we will continue through the Department of Health to provide public information. We will have pop-ups in Washington Mall and various places throughout the Island to encourage persons to know their HIV status, to remind them that testing is free as well as confidential at the clinic.

The clinic will also be hosting public engagements. We will continue to have a very detailed social media campaign throughout the month of June to provide further awareness to members of the public. We will also continue with radio announcements and the like, as well as publicity through our social media.

So, it's a very, very active campaign for this month, particularly in light of our recent uptick that I've indicated previously. However, the month of June will see heightened activity as it relates to public awareness as well as encouraging members, individuals, to know their status and to avail themselves of the free and confidential testing available at the Hamilton Health Clinic.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister for that very important response in relation to this issue.

Those of us who are old enough to remember may remember that there was a significant advertising campaign in relation to HIV and testing in the . . . 1990s, I want to say. I know it was on the back of buses, et cetera. Is consideration being given . . . Is the budget available for the Ministry of Health to do that sort of reminder, given the point that we have had four cases over four weeks? Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, those are very good suggestions, and I will take that to the team to see whether that's something that we can include in our health promotion activities. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.
Any further questions?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question.

The Speaker: Yes. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you again to the Honourable Minister for her reminder to the general public and the listening public and this Honourable House that the testing is both free and confidential.

Could the Honourable Minister elaborate slightly on what that would involve for someone who is a member of the public and has concerns in what he or she would have to do to go about obtaining that free and confidential testing at a high level?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you.

I would suggest that [in] the first instances the individual would either present themselves to the Hamilton Clinic. Or, alternatively, call . . . maybe before we finish in the next 15 minutes, I will have an answer with respect to the times that the clinic is open when they do provide the testing. But I would say that the first instance would be for those individuals to just either call the clinic or attend and they can be informed as to the dates. I know it operates on various days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00 to 2:00. I don't have that information in front of me, but I would invite members of the public to make those enquiries directly to the clinic.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I thank the Minister for highlighting this important issue.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, Ministers, that brings us to an end of the Question Period for today and we will now move on with the

Order Paper. And the next item on the Order Paper . . . Minister, you are quick today.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: The Minister . . . Oh, the Premier is up first. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The boss always gets his way.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy Premier is going to be moving the motion to adjourn for lunch on my behalf because I do have an appointment, so I'd just like to do this right quick before I depart, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that this Honourable House send a letter of condolences to the [family of the] late Mrs. Matilda Caines of [10] Mount Hill [Mews], my constituent and someone, Mr. Speaker, who I have known for basically my entire life. Mrs. Matilda Caines and her late husband who predeceased her in 2017, Kenneth Caines, were the elders at Shiloh Gospel Chapel where I attended as a child, the very first church that I ever attended. And I have known them my entire life. I was blessed to have the ability and privilege to represent her in Parliament. It was always a lovely thing to visit her house. And one thing that she would always do was make sure that I would be filled up with prayer. If I called her for her birthday, there would be a good prayer. She would tell me that she was praying for me. She would tell me that she has me in her thoughts and keeping us in her prayers. And so, it was great.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very poignant experience for me because . . . and I'm grateful that I did actually get to see her in Agape House before she passed and to just express to her directly how grateful I was for the support and guidance which she provided through my entire life. She was one of the figures that I looked up to as a child attending Sunday School dutifully every Sunday for as soon as I could attend.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we have lost a great woman of God, a prayer warrior for this country. And I would like to ask the Honourable House to express, or to send a letter of condolences to her family, her sons, Kenneth and also Troy Caines, as well.

I'd like to associate the Reverend Dr. Emilygail Dill, and also the Honourable Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors with those condolences.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, I know you jumped pretty quickly just now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know when your boss speaks you must take note.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . . I am sure you're familiar with the term of most married couples getting points. Mr. Speaker, I would like to see if I can get a 15-pointer today by sending congratulations to a lady by the name of Joanne De Silva, who just happens to be my wife of 44 years tomorrow.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Tomorrow. All right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, she has been my rock and support not only for 44 years but, in particular, during my sometimes very rough and rocky road during my 20-year political career. So, I would like to give her congratulations for her support but also for . . . you would know, Mr. Speaker, what our wives have to put up with during our political career. So, I certainly wish to congratulate her. And hopefully it's a 15-pointer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on another matter, I would like to give thanks, it's been just over a year since we have been heavily involved with housing in the country, and with the chance of leaving someone out, I would like to thank a few people for their work, hard work with regard to getting housing produced for the people of this country that is so desperate need.

And those people, Mr. Speaker, would be: Bermuda Housing Corporation; Mr. Paul Martin; Mark Melo; Joy; Keino; Blake; Lakila. And of course, our hard-working chairman, Mr. Chris Famous, and the entire Bermuda Housing Corporation Board. Also, Bermuda Land Management Company CEO Andrew Dias and his board. And of course, MP Dr. Rev. Emilygail [Dill], who has been fighting on behalf of her people. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not always been easy, and I would like to thank her.

Mr. Speaker, whilst I'm thanking, I would also like to thank my former Permanent Secretary Andrew Pettit; my current Permanent Secretary, Jeane Nikolai; Hugo Pereira; Julia Marshall; Jane Brett; and Tracey Wilkinson. That's my team at the Ministry, Mr. Speaker. And also, our banking partners Bermuda Commercial Bank and Clarien Bank who have put up the funds to produce these 229 homes, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to personally thank the Premier, [and] Financial Secretary, Chid Ofoego, who have been instrumental in pressing these housing initiatives forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We have about three minutes left.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Let's do that three.

Go ahead, MP DeCouto. You've got three minutes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Portugal, the Azores, and the Portuguese community in Bermuda for the recent celebration of Portugal Day. And I know that we all would like to acknowledge the contributions of the people of Portuguese descent and that community to the success of Bermuda and the richness of our culture.

I would also like to highlight the arrival of the *[NRP] Sagres*, which has been gracing Front Street with a very large Portuguese flag. It might be as large as some American flags you might see. And I've certainly enjoyed seeing that flag waving.

Speaking of boats, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to, ahead of time, wish luck and safe passage to the competitors in the Newport Bermuda Race. This will be the 100th anniversary of that first race to Bermuda in 1906.

[Desk thumping]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This year there will be 149 entries, and I wish them all a fast race, with some excitement, but not too much excitement, Mr. Speaker. And I know that when they get here, we will look forward to welcoming them with Bermudian hospitality. And I know they will look forward to enjoying that, Mr. Speaker. So, thank you very much.

The Speaker: Okay, Minister, I'm trying to squeeze you in. Go ahead.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House if I can take those couple of minutes.

Mr. Speaker, every time we come to the House and give obituary requests or condolences, we have to remember that there are families who are out there that are grieving. And I also would like to just send condolences to the family of Mary Janette Burgess, very . . . a matriarch known in the Hamilton Parish area and condolences to her beloved husband, Norris Burgess, Sr., as well as her children Lovette, Norris, McAlister, Anternette, Dawnette, Norette, Suzette, Juliette, Phillip, and Noreen. I'll associate MP Dill—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —and everyone in the House. I just wanted to share our love and let the family know that we are thinking of them at this time.

I do also want to be associated with the condolences from our Premier with Mama Caines and to her children, Kenneth, Stephen and Troy. Mama Caines was attending also with the family of Open Door Christian Assembly, and she always came to share her love for the Lord. And so, I do want to also give my associations with the comments and condolences.

Mr. Speaker, I also just want to congratulate our Bermuda women's football team as they conquered and defeated the team Belize in a friendly game that they had last week. And this last weekend I had the opportunity to attend a football event. It was a walking football event for persons

over the age of 50. And Coach Curly helps to run that programme. But there are many people in our community who are doing great things and providing opportunities for our people in our community to have the opportunity to do something physical. And so, I want to congratulate him for the time and dedication that he puts in with that.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I just also want to congratulate my constituents, Michael and Debra Glasgow, who are celebrating 43 years, [their] wedding anniversary this year. And, you know, as an MP you watch your constituents go through many things. And 43 years is a long time of marriage, you know, with the ups and downs and the dedication and time that's put in. And so, wishing them a happy anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

And I'm going to call on the Deputy Premier. But before I do, Deputy, I'm just going to acknowledge that during the Question Period, the other written questions that were outstanding, the Minister of Housing has provided for us now. So, the Opposition has them. So, all written questions have been received today.

Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now would like us to adjourn for lunch returning at two o'clock.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

I believe none.

The House will now stand adjourned until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:33 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope you all had a good lunch.

[Gavel]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuing]

The Speaker: The House is now back in session. And when we broke for lunch, we were in the start of the Congratulatory and Obituary Speeches. Are there any other Members who wish to make a contribution at this time?

MP Lister, I see you on your feet.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead. You have got your three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you. I will not be too long, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise to give congratulations, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, and then the following week at my alma mater, Bermuda Institute had their graduation services for the kindergarten, middle school, and high school. And so, I would like to just send congratulations to all of those, whether they passed from kindergarten into primary school or graduated from the middle school to the high school. I would like to congratulate them.

And a few of the persons who graduated in the graduating class of 2026 from high school, I would just like to recognise a few of them. I will declare my interest. Some are my cousins.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: No, my . . . my votes . . . my cousin, Jasmine Showers, she graduated and also my cousin, Elijah Showers. They both graduated from Bermuda Institute, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take some time just to recognise another graduate from Bermuda Institute, young Mr. Knaledge Harford. He . . . he was a recipient of the . . . Last year, in honour of my mother we created the Miranda Lister [Education] Scholarship at Bermuda Institute to recognise students who graduated by representing the values that she instilled in not only just her children, but in every student that she taught. And last year was the first year. This year was the second year. The recipient was young Mr. Knaledge Harford.

And the story goes a bit deeper. Recently, about 2017, 2018, when my mother was teaching at Dellwood Middle School and he was a student there, she taught him. And she saw in him that he had the potential to be better and do better. So, she actually took it upon herself (after speaking with his family and they agreed) to actually pay for him to go to Bermuda Institute. So, for his years at Bermuda Institute, my mother paid for Knaledge to attend. And so, to see that now come to fruition where he has completed his time at Bermuda Institute, graduated . . . And he is looking to go on to become a mechanical engineer. So, again, I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

And again, congratulate not just him but all these students who graduated from Bermuda Institute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [it is] with a heavy heart that I rise to offer condolences to the family of the of the late Frederick Hall, Sr., well known to many around Bermuda as “Crazy Horse.” I will associate Members from the East End, constituencies 1 and 3, in particular.

Mr. Hall is first cousin to my mother. His father, Clinton “Ikey” Hall, and my grandmother, Ivy Ruth Hall Anderson, were siblings. And so, I grew up knowing Mr. Hall very well from a young age. And then moving to St. George's and living [in] St. George's, [I] got to know his sons and grandchildren also very well. A well-known sporting family. He was a Wellington Rover and a goalkeeper. His late grandson and his son, Troy, were both national team goalkeepers as well. He was a colourful character without a doubt.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And [I] associate Minister Brother Tyrrell—the [Government] Whip—and the Premier as well.

On a happier note, I would like to recognise the 80th anniversary of Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, a pioneer golf club of the Powell family, the late William Powell and his daughter, Renee, and his son, Larry. Renee, I have known for all my golfing life, having followed her as the second African American to play on the LPGA [Ladies Professional Golf Association] Tour. She continues to run the golf club. It is the most celebrated family . . . one of the most celebrated families in the game of golf.

Her father built that golf course in East Canton because in 1946 he was denied access to golf courses, having served in the military. Some White doctors in the area bankrolled him, and he built this golf course. It has become an iconic golf course in America. I was happy to represent my family, my legacy in golf, my family's legacy, and also Bermuda, the Bermuda government golf courses. Mr. Jason Wade made sure that there was representation because there is a connection between Clearview and Oceanview. Both were brain[children] in the 1940s for similar reasons, and they have a close connection. And we look to foster that connection even further.

Relationships are the cornerstone of tourism. And I want to thank Mr. Steven Lambert Jr. [of] the Port Royal Golf Club, for accompanying us on that journey. And thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Sammons, the historian, that made it possible for us to be present.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Mrs. Renee Ming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She was not as fast as she thought today.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, I was.
[Laughter]

Mrs. Renee Ming: In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the comments and prayers for the family of Janette Burgess. I know it was done earlier, but I just want to make sure that I am associated with that. The Burgess family is definitely in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

And on a happier note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give congratulations to some of the schools in my area. St. George's Preparatory School did their annual Heritage Day Parade. And it started at the Sylvia Richardson Care Facility. They went down Barracks Hill (for those of you from St. George's, you will know where that is), onto the square around Ordnance Island, and they headed back to school. And they gave their view of Gombeys, majorettes, [the Royal] Bermuda Regiment, and some topical things as it relates to the Island. The poor children—it was kind of hot that day, but they did their very best. And we are extremely proud of them.

Also, East End Primary School did their spring presentation last week. It was *Annie*. I will associate MP Foggo with it. If you missed it, you missed it because it was an excellent production. I associate Minister Rabain [with that] as well. The children were awesome. Their lines were on point. Their songs were great. It is unfortunate that it will not be held again, but it actually was one of those events that is heartwarming when you get to see our children display so many talents and be able to just highlight who they are. Because in some cases . . . I know I thought Annie was a quiet student at the school, even though she is a Foggo. But she was on point. She knew every single line. She danced 'til her heart was content. And, Lunn, he did a great job.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend congratulations to the All Grads [Rhythm and] Fashion Show. That was held last weekend, and it is the brainchild of Ms. Thompson. She actually hails from the east, but her idea for this was to bring graduates together, all of the 2026 graduates from all the schools. And they did a fashion show. Her hope is that they fostered lifelong friendships with each other and that they maintain that through the rest of their lives. It was held at City Hall. Mr. Fotogenik was the emcee, so you can imagine that there were laughs. But it was actually really awesome to see our children once again doing what it is that they like to do, being passionate about it, and just putting themselves, in some of their cases, out in a space that they would not normally do.

So, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you very much.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to the House and to the listening public.

Again, I would like to associate myself with the remarks from MP Ming regarding the production of *Annie*. It was second to none, first class in every way, shape, and form. And yes, indeed, she did say Foggos were lead actors and actresses in this play. So, no wonder it was nothing but superb.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason why I got up today is to express condolences regarding the loss of Mr. Ken Pitcher, a former St. Georgian Cup Match player (I would like to associate MP Ming), a St. David's Islander, and cricket player. And he acquitted himself extremely well, both on the Cup Match pitch as well as at Lord's when he had to play.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Excuse me?

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: No, he is St. George's all the way. He is a former neighbour from Old Maid's Lane as well and a former police officer. And I would also like to associate MP Craig Cannonier with these remarks as a fellow St. Georgian and a St. Georgian cricket supporter and a St. David's Island cricket supporter. It would be remiss of me if I did not include him in these condolences as well. So, Ken will be missed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: It would be remiss of me not to include the loss that the police department felt with Ken because even though Ken started as an older police cadet (I think he was a police cadet in his 30s), while on the police force, he made such an impression that he was never forgotten. And Ken did in his last few years living in Bermuda . . . He was also my constituent and very much a supporter because, as I said in the beginning, he was an old neighbour of mine. St. George's will miss him. And so, condolences go out to his family, his sister, nieces, his daughter, and of course his wife, who no longer lives in Bermuda, was here, and has returned home. But she was an ardent, ardent supporter of her husband.

Thank you. Yes.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Any other Member?
Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness for me to announce the passing of Ms. Gloria Johnson. Ms. Gloria Johnson was the mother of well-known Progressive Labour Party supporter and life member Ronda Johnson-Trott. And Mr. Speaker, to make matters even more [sombre], when I did speak to Ronda, who is a constituent of mine, on Sunday, she informed me that her brother was in Agape House and he probably would not last much longer, and he ended up dying, passing away the next day. And so, she finds herself mourning both her mother and her brother within one day of each other. And so, I would just like this body to send a letter of condolences to Ms. Trott.

Mr. Speaker, on a happier note, I would like congratulations sent to the cohort (and I know this was spoken about earlier) of the newest graduates from the Mirrors [Emerging Leaders] Programme that passed out Saturday. And I declare my interest because my daughter was one of the graduates.

And, Mr. Speaker, to bring it into perspective for persons within this House who may not know, the Mirrors [Emerging Leaders] Programme is a year-long programme that requires the participants to not only speak to their personal mentors once a week, but they are also required to do various things weekly, various gatherings throughout the year. And it is also this particular year [that] there was an overseas component where they travelled to Singapore for a week to interact with other members of the accredited programme, that is, Mirrors, other young persons from throughout the world.

And so, it was really excellent to see them gather this weekend and get their certificates. And to see the camaraderie between these young people gives me great hope for the leadership of generations to come.

And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Darrell.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am going to start on a sombre note and then work my way up to more celebratory matters.

So first, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family and Mr. Erick Taylor on the passing of his son, Mr. Dylan Taylor. Unfortunately, Dylan was only 23 years old when he passed away in a very tragic bike accident a few weeks ago. And his father, Mr. Erick Taylor, is a constituent of mine. And I also knew his late mother, Ms. Tori Baxter Taylor. So, I would like to have condolences sent to that family of this young man who has tragically lost his life on our roads.

And transitioning, Mr. Speaker, to a happier note, I would like to send congratulations. I am not sure if it has been done in here before, but I would like to do it from a formal capacity in my role as Minister responsible for Tourism to Ms. Dee Francis. Those of you would know Ms. Dee Francis worked as the administrator at the Bermuda Hotels Association [BHA] for 45 years, Mr. Speaker. And that is her role. I have associated many Members of this House with her retirement.

Ms. Francis, if you ever walked into the office of BHA, was just a ball of energy and a light. She just lit up the room, whether it was just if you were stopping by to drop something off or if you were stopping by for a formal meeting with the hotel directors and managers. So, it is fitting that the Bermuda Hotels Association is going to be having a retirement celebration for her this evening over at the Hamilton Princess. And I will stop by to share in the celebration of all of the years that she worked and the part that she played in assisting all of us who bring tourism to light in this country.

So, to Ms. Francis, I am sure if she is not listening that someone very close to her will make sure she gets this message. And I want to say on behalf of all of the stakeholders who are a part of tourism in this country . . . I want to say job well done to you, Ms. Dee Francis. And we are better as a country for what she has done in her service in this space over the last 45 years. So, I am sure knowing her that she will enjoy her retirement with her friends and family. And I want to say once again, thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Minister . . .

MP Smith, Linda Smith?

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I actually thought Minister Darrell was going to beat me to the punch, but I wanted to extend congratulations to Nicholas Christopher, who won a Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in the musical *Chess*. And maybe we [could] associate the House on that. I know his father, Ed Christopher, is very proud of him. It is a great achievement for a Bermudian, obviously, and it is difficult for anybody to achieve that. So—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: No, he . . . No, he won.

An Hon. Member: No, no.

[Crosstalk]

Ms. Linda Smith: I read it on the news wires. Oh, okay. I am sorry then. I will withdraw that. I read it on several news—

An Hon. Member: Not the nomination?

Ms. Linda Smith: No, not the nomination, but the winning of it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: So, okay, I retract that. I was very excited. But you know what? I am equally as excited that he was nominated, and it is a great honour. So—

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Linda Smith: —congratulations. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP, Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have congratulatory remarks go to the Daley siblings, both Elijah and Elan Daley. Over the weekend, both hit their qualifying times for [the]

Commonwealth Games to join the siblings of the Harveys, who are also going to be part of the Commonwealth Games. Both of those athletes are also deciding whether they are going to have the ability to actually compete both at Commonwealth Games and at [the] CAC [Central American and Caribbean] Games. The two competitions overlap, one being in Glasgow, Scotland, the other one being in Santo Domingo. So, I know that will be a difficult feat. But congratulations to both of them for the hard work that they have done to make the times that they did over the weekend. Both of them have been in contact with me, excited about the performance, and looking forward to swimming even faster later on this summer. So, congratulations to both of them.

The Speaker: Good.

MP Tyrrell, Mr. [Government] Whip, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that congratulations be sent to the primary school in my area, Purvis [Parish School]. Both MP Wilmot and I had the opportunity to attend their school assembly. It was a special assembly where every grade was there. And the reason I am asking for congratulations to be sent to them is that the discipline that I saw from the children from P1 all the way up . . . I think it is P7 they go to. Their behaviour throughout the whole time was nothing but disciplined. They call themselves “students of excellence.” And everyone repeated their mission statement quite easily. So, they are obviously very good students and talented. And I think it made it special, certainly for myself, that at the end of the assembly, the P4s and P7s were released, and I was asked to read to P1 to P3. It was about 10 minutes, and they were attentive the whole time that I was speaking. So, I think there is something special going on at Purvis Primary. And again, I would like to associate the former Education Minister Rabain. Certainly, they are a school of excellence. So again, congratulations to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Weeks, you have your three minutes, sir.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I would like to be associated with the remarks [for] Ms. Gloria Johnson and her son, Anthony Johnson, affectionately known as “Bootsie.” They were constituents of mine. [The] mom passed, I believe on Monday or Sunday, and Bootsie died the next day. They are constituents, and I heard the Minister for [constituency] 13 say that they were very staunch PLP supporters right until the end. And their daughter and sister, Ronda, is very much a strong supporter of the party and for me as the MP for

[constituency] 16. So, my heart goes out to them and the family in this time of grieving.

I would also like to be associated with one positive note, Mr. Speaker. I heard a Member speak of the Portuguese commander of the ship that is here. They paid a courtesy visit to my office yesterday. We sat down, and we had a pretty good talk. After all the pleasantries were over, we talked football. We talked about the possibility of Portugal winning the [FIFA] World Cup, and the like. I had a pleasant conversation with the commander and his team, and I wish them well.

Thank you.

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

Minister Adams.

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to send a hearty congratulations to Ms. Abby Charles, who was recently crowned Miss Arizona for America. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know Ms. Abby Charles at all, but I do know her father, Curtis Charles, who works in the department of Works and Engineering. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you there is no prouder father at the moment of his daughter. He was beaming as he told me of her accomplishments. And I shall associate the House—

The Speaker: Yes, associate the House.

Hon. Jache Adams: —for those congratulations and indeed to him as well as she goes on to compete for Miss for America at the end of August of this year in Las Vegas.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to send a congratulations to Ms. Suzette Harvey and United Dance Productions [UDP] who, over last weekend, put on (I think it was) three showcase events. There was a very special and near and dear five-year-old to me who had some performances, some ballets and taps. And it was a well-attended and really well-executed show. And I think it was the 33rd annual recital for UDP. And certainly, I wish them congratulations and wish them 33 more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman, you have your three minutes.

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

I am really just standing to be associated with the Honourable Minister, Michael Weeks, who was on the boat last night not only to celebrate [Portugal] Day the day prior but also to partake in the lovely celebration that was given in honour of Portuguese Bermudians and, more specifically, certain Azorean Bermudians. It was nice to see the

Minister there. I believe also Mr. Jache Adams was there, as was former Premier Craig Cannonier, and indeed the Opposition Leader Ben Smith, and myself. If I have missed anyone out of that list, I am sorry. But it was a lovely event.

Portugal obviously has a long history of naval . . . I will not say superiority because obviously I have a little bit of British history in me, but certainly [it is] well regarded as a naval country. And it was extremely impressive to see the quality of this ship last night. And we felt very, very proud to be part of the celebration. We were certainly well taken care of. And the speeches that echoed the importance of the relationship between the Azores and Bermuda and Portugal (more broadly) and Bermuda were heartfelt and moving. So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to be associated with the comments by the Minister. And as he failed to recognise Minister Adams, I will throw him in the wash too.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A job well done by those who organised it, including the Honorary Consul of Portugal, Andrea Moniz DeSouza.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Does] any other Member [wish to speak]? There are none.

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

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: We are now on the Orders of the Day.

And the first item up today is [Order] No. 2. The second reading of the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Premier.

[Pause]

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

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

BILL

SECOND READING

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY) RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are requested to now give consideration to the Bill entitled Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026.

The Bill proposes to amend the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Act 2008 to approve an additional five-year period of duty relief in respect of all capital goods for use in capital investment schemes for retail shops.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the period of customs duty [relief] for retail shops was last extended for a period of five years, effective the 1st of April 2021, and this period of relief expired on the 31st of March 2026. Honourable Members would appreciate the importance of the Government's ongoing commitment to supporting Bermuda's retail sector.

And just to share information with this Honourable House, since this introduction of this relief in April 2008, Bermuda's retail sector has benefited by claiming and receiving \$6.9 million in duty relief in respect of \$13 million worth of goods imported for the renovation and refurbishment of their shops. Even further, five years of duty relief encourages further refurbishment and modernisation and provides investor certainty.

By providing a zero per cent rate on capital goods, the Government lowers the barrier for retailers to upgrade their physical stores and technological infrastructure, and it also furnishes a predictable fiscal environment, allowing businesses to plan and execute large-scale renovation or expansion projects that may require several years to complete.

Moreover, capital development relief encourages job creation and capital investment projects such as shop fitting and construction, directly creating demand for local labour and services, therefore contributing to [the] local economy.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, the history of this was retail shops, just like restaurants, kind of complained. I do not think that is the right word, but [they] pointed out the difference because hotels, which would have retail establishments then, would get duty-free relief because they would get duty relief on their capital goods. And it was just a way of also thinking about levelling the playing field. So that was the genesis of it. It has been going on since 2008, clearly, and we continue to extend it because it is beneficial to the overall economy.

Honourable Members will be aware that locals enjoy shopping online, and as a direct consequence, Bermuda's retailers face robust competition from a myriad of e-tailers. We know that online sales currently make up 21 per cent of all retail transactions, and that number is expected to grow. Maintaining relief on capital investments will help local shops reduce their overheads and allow them to compete more effectively on both price and shopping experience.

The measures of the Bill form part of the Government's continued commitment to supporting Bermuda's retail sector. And over the next five years, this duty concession will have a significant benefit to local brick-and-mortar shops and, by extension, the general economy of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Government intends for the extended period of duty concessions to be deemed to have come into effect on the 1st of April 2026 to provide for an uninterrupted retail shops duty relief for a full five-year period through the 31st of March 2031. And I will comment on further specific measures in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for that presentation.

Certainly, we in the [OBA] One Bermuda Alliance support the continuation of this break. The listening public knows that we are firm believers of doing everything possible to support the local economy. Everyone knows when you walk up and down the streets you can see that it is tough for people running a small business, especially a shop. They are competing with people who now can fly overseas having bigger duty breaks. They are competing with online businesses that import to Bermuda.

And it is important for Bermuda that we have a vibrant economy on the street. That, in turn, is beneficial not just for the people owning those shops [but] for the employees who work in those shops. And it creates a more vibrant environment and then enhances our tourism product. Furthermore, it makes Bermuda a more dynamic and

interesting place for those who want to come and work here and to continue to come from overseas and invest and set up their business in Bermuda. So, certainly, we support this Bill for all those reasons.

The Premier did kindly answer the number about how many dollars of relief were taken up. I do not know if he would happen to know how many different businesses took advantage of this opportunity. If he is able to find that in his binder, we certainly would love to know that.

And certainly, we would add and repeat our call that we would like to create further opportunities to make it more feasible to be a retailer in Bermuda. And one example of something that we have called for is how we can move the customs duty processing to be paid after goods are sold. Because anyone in a small business or retail knows cash flow is king—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and that would be a huge thing to assist those businesses. So, we repeat our call to the Government to continue to find ways to support local retailers. And we hope that they will seriously consider ways of allowing retailers to defer customs duty payments until after goods are sold.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Hayward, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to weigh in on this Bill today.

As the Minister of Economy and Labour, my job is being responsible for economic growth, economic development, and the expansion of jobs in Bermuda. [It is] also looking to ensure that we expand and diversify our economy in an inclusive and sustainable way.

We set out and we developed an Economic Development Strategy [2023–2027] that has five pillars in it. One of the five strategic priorities within the Economic Development Strategy was the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises. Small businesses in Bermuda make up over 80 per cent of all business in Bermuda. And so, when we look at what is the cornerstone of our economy, it is small businesses. A large portion of those small businesses are in the retail sector.

Additional to that, when we start to talk about key industries in our economy, retail remains a key industry for the simple fact of the number of Bermudians it actually employs. The number of Bermudians retail actually employs is kind of a direct result of Government's intervention as it pertains to ensuring that we restrict jobs in that particular category as much as we possibly can within that industrial section. But the relief that we are providing today acts as support that we are giving to our retail establishments in Bermuda.

I have since rolled out the National Entrepreneurship Strategy and Implementation Roadmap 2026, which

has a number of goals in it: one being how we create a better regulatory environment to ease the starting up of doing businesses and remove bureaucracy and bottlenecks as much as we can; how we assist entrepreneurs and retailers to acquire financing; also, how we ensure that we create a better ecosystem to allow them to operate. This one measure falls directly in alignment with that.

[At] face value, it just looks like we are providing retailer support. But when you look at the multiplier effect of what is actually being done, we are also stimulating greater levels of development as well because construction activity needs to take place once the renovations actually start. Our construction sector also employs many within our economy, and so that is an important aspect.

We talk about the transition to e-commerce and the competition that our brick and mortars have to navigate. Customers are looking for revitalised experiences when they enter a retail establishment. And as a result of this, measures such as we are doing today will allow for retailers to reduce some of the cost for the development so that they can actually provide better experiences for their customers.

Additional to that, when we start to talk about revitalisation of economic empowerment zones, especially within Bermuda, we want to see more vibrant economic hubs in Bermuda. And we cannot get vibrant hubs if we have a deterioration of physical infrastructure in those particular hubs. And so, this helps to support that.

I know that the Opposition has been calling for relief as it pertains to customs duty. But there is a measure in place where retailers and small business can get a deferment on their customs duty for a period of time. And I think we need to do a better job at educating our business sector of what opportunities actually exist. There are also payroll tax concessions for new establishments as well. And so, I will have those meaningful discussions with the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation to speak to how we can better inform entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises of all of the work that the Government is doing. But the National Entrepreneurship Strategy will dictate the work that we are doing moving forward. And we have a number of proposals as it pertains to how we can reduce the cost of doing business for our establishments in Bermuda.

So, this is a necessary and appropriate step. It is very much supported by the Ministry of Economy and Labour. And I thank the Premier and Minister of Finance for bringing this Bill today.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Does any other Member . . .

Junior Minister Lister, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I just want to lend my support to this Bill being brought. But first, I would recognise the support from the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. We might not always agree on everything. But when things are simple, straightforward, and benefit the whole of the Island, it is good to know that we can all agree on the same thing.

I want to continue on the same line as the Minister before me, Mr. Speaker, in that when you walk down Reid Street, Front Street, Church Street, all these different streets in Bermuda, you see the effect of this Bill that we are now looking to extend for another five years. You see businesses that are upgrading, improving their facilities, their physical infrastructure. And that has an impact not just appearance-wise, but we look at our tourists. When tourists come here, you know, for so long, there has always been a Bermuda . . . While there is nothing wrong with looking vintage and old-fashioned, we did look outdated sometimes. So, it is good to now see these refreshments, these upgrades being made.

So, when tourists come, it makes Hamilton and whatever other stores take this opportunity up, look alive and freshened up, and welcoming and encouraging for tourists to come in, and not only just the tourists, but local Bermudians. You know, you walk around, you can see that this store . . . And I [will] just take one example, Marks and Spencer's, where recently they put in new windows, bigger windows, so you can see what is in the store. And, you know, it is more inviting, these stores.

So, again, I think it is a benefit appearance-wise to make these businesses be able to upgrade, look fresh and lively. And, again, it has the impact, as the previous Minister before me said, not just on the retail stores but [on] the contractors, the construction workers, who have to come in and do these upgrades and refurbishments, Mr. Speaker. So, there is an overall positive impact for not just the stores but the economy in Bermuda.

And, again, I just want to lend my support to this and encourage and thank the Minister of Finance for bringing this. And we hope to see this passed at a later date, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member make a contribution at this time?

There are none.
Minister of Finance.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the bipartisan support, the support of the Minister of Economy and Labour, certainly in the work that he is doing to continue to support, and also from the Junior Minister of Justice because the points that he made are well reflected.

I do recognise that there was one question, and a decent question, from MP DeCouto, because it allows us to share how popular this thing is.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, it is. It is popular.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is good.

So, MP DeCouto asked, How many businesses have claimed this particular relief? And the answer is, just in the first quarter of this year alone, 22 businesses have claimed for this relief since the 1st of April 2026.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, and what is important to recognise, Mr. Speaker, is this is everything. It will go from beauty salons to barbershops to other things, and so it is important that we recognise that there are a number of things which are happening here. But, you know, 22 businesses that are upgrading in some way, shape, or form their retail establishments and storefronts is positive momentum for the economy. And if the Honourable Member wishes us to report on uptake since the inception of duty relief, I am happy for him to write to the Minister of Finance and the teams at Customs will do their best to get that answer for him.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 2:44 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Retail Shops \(Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments\) Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

At the risk of being ruled out of order, I would just like to serve you notice that as of Tuesday you will not see me in this Honourable House in any other colour but red and blue.

The Chairman: I feel sorry for you. Yes.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, may I move all the clauses?

The Chairman: Yes. It has been moved that all the . . . It has been asked that all the clauses be moved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

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

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 7(2)(b)(i) of the Hotels (Temporary Customs Duty Relief) Act 1991 *[sic]* by deleting the reference to the 31st of March 2026 and substituting 31st of March 2031.

And clause 3 deems the Act to have come into force on the 1st of April 2026.

The Chairman: Okay. Yes.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through] 3?

Hon. E. David Burt: And if I may just re-read clause 3?

The Chairman: Hold on. Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I just re-read the submission for clause 2 again?

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 2 amends [section] 7(2)(b)(i) of the Bill to extend the period for granting a temporary customs relief under approved capital investment scheme for a retail shop to the 31st of March 2031.

The Chairman: Yes. Okay. That is better clarification for us.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through to 3?

There are none.

I call on the Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clauses 1, 2, and 3.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

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

I move the preamble be approved.

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

Any objections?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

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

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 2:47 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. Thank you.

We will now move on. The next item on the Order Paper this afternoon is the second reading of the Payroll Tax Amendment [(No. 2)] Act 2026, again in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House is now the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, which establishes a simplified payroll tax structure for rideshare permit holders.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of ridesharing services under the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Act 2026 represents a significant modernisation of Bermuda's transportation sector. As part of this reform, it is essential that the payroll tax system applicable to ridesharing permit holders is clear into that industry. Ridesharing operators are individual service providers whose income is derived from providing ridesharing services directly to passengers through [an] approved dispatching platform. It would therefore be administratively burdensome to require those individuals to register as employers or self-employed persons, file quarterly payroll tax returns, calculate tax base on standard payroll tax bands, and as we have seen certainly when it comes to the taxi industry and/or the minibus industry, difficult to monitor, police, and collect, in some ways.

This Bill establishes a flat annual payroll tax of \$400 payable by the ridesharing permit holder. This fixed amount replaces all employer and employee payroll tax obligations related to ridesharing remuneration and, of course, Mr. Speaker, is the exact same that is charged to taxi drivers on an annual basis. So, there cannot be any question as to whether or not there is a level playing field. The [payment] must be made before [a] ridesharing permit is issued, ensuring clarity and certainty with the permit holder and the Government. This approach aligns with the Government's commitment to creating a modern accessible regulatory framework for ridesharing and ensures that ridesharing permit holders contribute to the tax system while avoiding unnecessary administrative burden.

Mr. Speaker, [it is] important to note we will get into it further in Committee because, of course, there will be a question as [there was] the announcement earlier today that, you know, ridesharing has started. But the brief says you have to pay your bill first. So, how is that actually possible? If that is the case . . . do not worry. We anticipate (see?) like I anticipated your question earlier? I got it.

The transitional provision ensures that persons who received a ridesharing permit immediately before the commencement date of this Act will have a grace period until the 31st of July to make the required payment, avoiding any disruption to the launch of the ridesharing service. Mr. Speaker, this Bill supports a broader transportation reform initiative and ensures the payroll tax system is appropriately aligned for the new ridesharing industry. [It is] another short Bill, Mr. Speaker, but [it is] important that we progress these matters forward. And with that, I welcome the comments of Honourable Members.

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier.

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

MP Cannonier, you are all smiles, would you like to make your contribution now?

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

Yes, grateful to see some of these synergies that the Premier, I guess, pre-empted in one of the questions that I did propose for this particular Act. And it was good to also listen this morning to the Statement from the actual Minister himself. So, I will save my one other question for when we go into Committee.

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But it is good to see this. I am glad for the synergies of how we are making this work. I would have thought that since ridesharing is already started we probably should have been doing this beforehand, but here we are. So, with that in mind, that is all I have to say until Committee.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None?

Finance Minister, Premier, would you like to take us into Committee?

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

I recognise the question asked by the Honourable Member. The date has always been set. Sometimes there are priorities from a legislative calendar. And so, the legislation just was not able to be done, but we made sure the transitional provision was there to not delay the ridesharing service but still to make sure that we were able to have it. So, it is a point that was recognised, but that is the reason why that transitional provision is in there, to not delay the initiative, because we certainly wanted to ensure that all of the visitors in our sold-out hotels this weekend and completely sold-out Island were able to get safely to their events, whatever date and time.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 2:52 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026**

The Chairman: Members, we are in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Payroll Tax Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

Madam Chairman, I would like to ask that we take under consideration all of the clauses.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we take all of the clauses under consideration.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you so very much, Madam Chairman, if I may.

The Chairman: Yes, you may.

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 inserts section 9BB into the Payroll Tax Act 1995 (special provision for ridesharing permit holders). A ridesharing permit holder shall be required to pay a flat rate of payroll tax per annum of \$400 (as prescribed by clause 3) before the issuance of a ridesharing permit by the Board under the Motor Car Act 1951.

Clause 3 inserts new section 4BB into the Payroll Tax Rates Act 1995 (ridesharing permit holders) to prescribe the flat rate of payroll tax per annum of \$400 payable for the purposes of section 9BB of the Payroll Tax Act 1995.

Clause 4 amends sections 35D and 35G of the Motor Car Act 1951. Paragraph (a) makes a consequential amendment to the Motor Car Act 1951 to specify that payroll tax payable under section 9BB of the Payroll Tax Act 1995 must be paid to the Tax Commissioner before the issuance of a ridesharing permit. Paragraph (b) clarifies in section 35G(1)(a)(ii) of the Motor Car Act 1951 that the Board may suspend a ridesharing permit where satisfied that a ridesharing permit holder is convicted of an offence under the Motor Car Act [1951] or any other enactment in relation to motor cars or road traffic.

Clause 5 provides for the commencement and transitional provisions. Clause 5(1) provides that the Bill shall be deemed to have come into effect on 24 April 2026, the date that the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Act 2026 came into force. And subsection (2) defines the transitional period as beginning on that date and ending on the date with which this Act receives Assent. Subsection (3) deems ridesharing permits issued during the traditional period to have been validly issued, and to remain valid provided the permit holder pays the payroll tax owing under section 9BB(3) of the Payroll Tax Act 1995 on or before the 31 July 2026. (I think a day where Somerset will celebrate victory.)

An Hon. Member: Yes. That's right.

The Chairman: You are quite hopeful.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through to 5, inclusively?

I recognise Member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, and thank you, [Madam Chairman].

Clause 3, under . . . sorry, yes, [new section] 4BB, where it says \$400 is prescribed as the amount for the purpose of section 9BB. I was just curious. Considering the . . . I believe the flat rate for taxis is \$600. Correct me if I am wrong. I think it is \$600. I was just trying to take into consideration to try and understand exactly how we got to the \$400 flat rate for ridesharing, considering taxi drivers are legally supposed to be on the road for 16 hours a day and the ridesharing is in no comparison to the time frame that they are on the road.

So, considering the amount of time and the rate of this flat rate, how did we come to \$400? I think just logically . . . and there has got to be a reason, but I think logically you would probably say, *Well, if \$600 for the taxi is considering the time that they are on the road, it probably should be a third of that \$600.* But it is not. It is actually \$400, two-thirds. So, I just wanted to know what the formulary was of coming to \$400 as opposed to any other figure. Maybe it was just easy. I don't know.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through to 5, inclusively?

There being none, I call on the Finance Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, this is why you should not ad lib your brief—

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —because you will introduce—

The Chairman: You made a mistake. I heard that.

Hon. E. David Burt: —incorrect information.

So, I appreciate the Honourable Member, and I retract that, and I hope that the record will reflect that. It is correct. It is \$400 not \$600, and it is less than taxis, just like the registration fee is less, because they are on the road less. But it was thought to put something there that was equitable. That was the number that was arrived at, and that is the explanation that I have received from the excellent Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport].

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through to 5, inclusively?

There are no other Members.

I call on the Minister.

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

I move that clauses 1 through 5 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 5 be approved.

Are there any objections?

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so approved.

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

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 2:58 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Payroll Tax Amendment [No. 2]) Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. That brings that matter to a close.

We will now move on to the next item. The next item is the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

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

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be now given to the draft Order entitled the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017 together with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEWOOD BERMUDA) ORDER 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of bringing this [Tourism Investment \(Rosewood Bermuda\) Order 2026](#) before this Honourable House is to enable the grant of tax relief to the developers investing in the tourism product Rosewood Bermuda, TP Holdco Ltd., which is in the national economic interest of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable House to take [this] under consideration.

Mr. Speaker, a key element of success in business is investment in the product to ensure it is always fresh and serves to meet the demands of customers that businesses aim to serve. Mr. Speaker, the hospitality business is no different. Destinations, hotels, and attractions that seek to trade only on reputation can often lose their edge, proving to be more of what they were than what they need to be. Success in this aggressive and competitive tourism marketplace demands that every affiliated tourism business consistently stays at the cutting edge.

Mr. Speaker, the Order before this Honourable House represents that kind of investment in a product proposed to be made by a key tourism site in Bermuda. Rosewood Bermuda is an iconic property. Located in the East End of the Island, the current owners have taken the foundation laid by their predecessors and have determined to grow the status of the hotel to meet the true luxury standard befitting its location.

Mr. Speaker, the Rosewood Bermuda property is a mixed-use development inclusive of the Rosewood Bermuda hotel, a beach club, an 18-hole golf course, a club, tennis facilities, and a marina. The hotel comprises of 88 guest rooms and suites, as well as five food and beverage outlets, banquet facilities, a spa, and other fitness facilities. In addition, there are several fractional and whole ownership residential developments which are located in the Tucker's Point master-planned estate, which are neither owned nor part of the hotel.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, TP Holdco Ltd. invested \$25 million in phase 1 renovations, completely repositioning the guest rooms, common areas, dining outlets, beach club, and clubhouse. Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2020 refers to the 2018 investment made then by TP Holdco Ltd. Mr. Speaker, phase 2

is the \$82,840,000 capital investment, which this Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 refers to, and includes additional hotel improvements, such as a new pickleball and padel courts, new food and beverage venues, and enhancements to the existing hotel amenities, the construction of eight new Rosewood-branded residences, and the replacement and upgrading of equipment, furniture, and fixtures.

Mr. Speaker, TP Holdco Ltd. is aware that the Tourism Investment Act 2017 was amended in 2025 to provide the Minister responsible for Tourism, with the approval of the Minister of Finance, the authority to revoke an existing Tourism Investment Order prior to its expiry. In accordance with this amendment, TP Holdco Ltd. submitted a request to the Minister responsible for Tourism to

1. revoke the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2020, which expires in January of 2028, save for the relief from customs duty, which expired on June 2, 2026; and
2. that the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 be issued simultaneously.

Mr. Speaker, this request was made such that Rosewood Bermuda hotels experiences no gap in relief, that is, between the revocation of the 2020 Order and the issue of the 2026 Order.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House will note that the terms of the 2026 Order are consistent with the Tourism Investment Act 2017 and provide the relief sought for a period of 15 years. That relief is set out in clause 3 of the Order, and again, is consistent with the principal Act.

Mr. Speaker, I draw the attention of this Honourable House to clause 4 of the Order, which sets out the terms and conditions by which the hotel qualifies for the exemption of the employer's share of the payroll tax and the exemption from land tax. Respectively, a management trainee programme for Bermuda is in operation at the hotel, and 70 per cent of its workforce is Bermudian for the relevant land tax exemption period. I hereby advise this Honourable House that for 2024 and 2025, Mr. Speaker, 90 per cent of the persons employed at Rosewood Bermuda were Bermudian, and that the same is projected for the years 2026 through 2029.

Mr. Speaker, TP Holdco Ltd. is committed to investing in Bermuda as a long-term partner. As such, I am pleased to commend this Order for the support, Mr. Speaker, of this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

I have been accused of being critical of this particular [Order]—

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:—but have also been praised by the Government for saying that it seems to be working in some sense. So, after having gone through the [Order] and listening to the Minister speak, I am persuaded that there is some confusion in understanding what we are doing here.

So, Rosewood got concessions and applied to the Minister. They were revoked, those concessions. And then, of course . . . So what I am trying to understand a little better is if, for instance, they come in and they have gotten eight years out of the concessions that normally would have given them, say, 15 years, and it is revoked, and then they come back in again under a new provision and say, *Well, look, we are now going to get 15 years*, we have just added 15 years onto the eight years. And the time has expanded. I am trying to understand that a little better because I understand the nature and the attempt to get this stuff going. But if we are compounding the time and it is expedient business-wise to revoke it before it expires, just then to get more time in the long run, I am not sure if we are defeating ourselves in the attempt of an intent of what we are looking to do.

So, I am hoping that the Minister can clarify that for us so that we understand exactly what is going on here because it does appear to be that in and of itself, they are now being able to extend that time by a substantial amount of years if they have it revoked. So, if the Minister can help us out there, I would appreciate it.

And as far as the eight residences, I was not still quite sure from the [Order] whether or not they were included also in the hotel occupancy pool. [It] did not specify it, so it would be good to know whether or not. I do not think that it is based on the—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sorry? Okay, yes. So on the back of the Schedule, you have the eight residences. So, it was not clear in the [Order] that they were not also a part of the pool for hotel occupancy. So, it would be good to hear from the Minister as to whether that is the case. I do not think it probably is, which is why we are doing clause [3](e), the deferral of landholding, and the like. But if the Minister could clarify that, that would be important.

So outside of that, you know, we have been through these many, many times before, and I appreciate the effort that is being made here to ensure that the hotels can get going. So, I would just ask that the Minister can clarify the compounding of this time, which is a concern of mine, and whether or not it is a part of the actual pool itself. Then we can go into Committee, but I do not think there is much there.

So, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King, are you on your feet? Yes, MP King.

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

Understanding that the purpose of the concessions is to assist the hotel developers and service providers with increasing the number of hotel beds and also creating opportunities for Bermudians to enter the service industry, as part of this concession, I understand that 90 per cent of the workforce is going to be Bermudian. The question I have is, Is there a stipulation that says there has to be ongoing training to ensure that we have Bermudians entering management and upper management positions as opposed to just frontline entry-level positions? Is that part of the concession package as well?

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a con—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan, are you on your feet to partake in this?

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

The Speaker: Okay. You have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased when I hear of these concessions coming forward, these Orders, because it is important for the hotel industry to have reinvestment in the product. In particular, you only need to look across the Causeway, which I do every time I pass the airport and look left, and you would see growth that has taken place there at Rosewood. If you look down just to the south of the quarry, you see more development taking place. If you go up to the golf course there, an area I used to practise at now has some very modern pedal courts there to provide a greater product.

And the growth of that particular sport is ever so evident in Bermuda, as other properties are starting to gravitate in that space as well. That bodes well for the industry. You cannot afford to be somewhat stagnant or stale when you see the refurbishment that takes place within properties.

I hasten to add that this particular type of Order that comes before us is not too dissimilar to what I recall not too long ago seeing for Rosedon in Hamilton and the amount of . . . And a historic Rosedon as well that we have seen take place not only for Rosedon in the Pitts Bay Road area, but also for Azura right there on the South Shore in the Paget/Warwick border. I think the former Minister Lawrence Scott's constituency up there in Warwick. We have seen the expansion and the growth that took place there as a result to include that property up there.

We have seen certainly a greater growth take place since we have had the introduction of the restoration of Southampton Princess. Very significant.

I always appreciate the former Premier [and] the Government Whip for finding ways to tickle the Government up and cause the Minister to have to look and maybe answer a question or two. But few would argue that it is a good thing that we have hotel properties looking at ways in which they can further improve their product to stay competitive in an ever-competitive world.

I recently spent a little time again down in Jamaica and have family members, connections, who are in this industry as well and know it is not easy to certainly find ways to make sure that your properties are invested into and the like. They have to do it. They have to do it no matter what country they are in. It could be Jamaica, Barbados, Anguilla, wherever. They are looking at ways, and so are we looking at ways in which we can make sure that it is Rosewood today. It could very well be St. Regis in St. George's tomorrow. And while I am in St. George's, I cannot help but to look across . . . when I go across the Causeway and I look and I look left and I see Rosewood, I only have to look straight ahead and look at the work that is being done with the assistance of these types of Orders at Grotto Bay, a Bermuda-owned property.

And may I encourage more Bermuda ownership in properties in Bermuda? That is something we should be aspiring to in Bermuda and encouraging. There was a time . . . there was a time when there were greater . . . But as times change, folks found more investment in changing those properties from hotel properties to condominium properties where they actually sold.

Mr. Speaker, I have to smile when I do look and I remember when persons were mounting a great challenge towards the redevelopment of the Princess some four or five years ago. Persons who now live in condominiums, what were hotels that I worked in, are leading the charge. I said, *Wait . . . wait . . . wait a minute*. You know, those beds that we used to have at 12,000 and down to three, we have got to get up at least to halfway. You want to maybe use some of these places again for hotel properties? You know, that took place. That took place in great number.

I am old enough to remember when the Condominium Act [1986] first came to Parliament. I was not in Parliament then, but I ran. It was around 1982, '83, '81, '82, '83 when the Condominium Act [1986] came and the Timeshare [(Licensing and Control)] Act [1981] got introduced around 1980, Mr. Speaker. And all these things factor in because nothing remains exactly the same. They do not. You have to evolve. We have seen the evolution of the Timeshare [(Licensing and Control)] Act [1981]. While I am down in St. George's where the timeshare lives and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You all right? Okay.

Now where timeshare lives and breathes, we have seen the rejuvenation of the St. George's Club Hotel. I tell people. I told a visitor. I said: *Listen. Let me share this with*

you. St. George's per capita has more of everything that Bermuda has to offer. And has per capita the best of what Bermuda has to offer. Three, three—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And yes, thank you.

I mean, you know, it was not without . . . It was not . . . You know what is funny? I listened to the Honourable Member saying thank you. Things were not without controversy. But when this Government came into power in 2017, we took those controversies and we worked with them like a responsible government would.

An Hon. Member: Exactly.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We were not the only government in Bermuda history that reversed the contract that a previous government did. And maybe that Member can speak and elaborate on that at some point in time. But I remember, so yes, we have embraced what we have had, what the previous Government did and worked with enhancing that.

And I am proud because I came to St. George's in a bygone era to open a very important hotel product, a golf course, in 1985. Right? And I have been in St. George's ever since. But I can say this, that we have the St. Regis Hotel. We have the former Aunt Nea's Inn [at Hillcrest], [a] boutique hotel, one of the most beautiful examples of Bermuda ownership of a hotel property in Bermuda in St. George's. We have the St. George's Club Hotel. We have in St. George's Parish . . . we have the Grotto Bay. We also have the Rosewood in St. George's Parish and parts of Mid Ocean Club in St. George's Parish. And pretty soon, we might just claim that little bit of The Loren for St. George's, too, because I think, if I look at the old maps, that was part of St. George's as well. So, everything you need to have is right down there in the glorious east. And soon the Cup will be too.

The Speaker: Except for the Cup. Except for the Cup.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And soon the Cup will be too.

The Speaker: No, no. That won't join you.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am very pleased the glass is half full for tourism. The glass is half full. And that is because there are persons out there looking at ways to reinvest in the properties that exist and looking to invest in the properties that remain dormant for quite some time. Elbow Beach and one of my favourites I am looking to see something happen in (and I am throwing it out there), two of them actually, [are] Lantana and Sonesta, family-connected properties just like the Princess too. Oh yes. Lantana, just like Mid Ocean was at one point in time too . . . So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you for the growth.

And I just will end with this. I returned home on Wednesday to a full United Airlines flight out of Newark where, when I walked to the Bermuda line, I walked right up to the counter.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I walked right up to the counter. When I looked over there, I said, *Well, maybe I should stand in back and let the tourists get through and spend a little bit of money a little bit earlier.* I will throw that out there . . . bringing so many tourists to the Island this month. And I saw a few carnival folk[s] in there too. I saw a few carnival—

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I saw a few carnival . . . And not to profile, but you know,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —there are good shapes.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, they are!

But I just wanted to say that in the spirit of heroes, and this is an important holiday weekend for me, for tourism. Because, you know, I come from a family of golfers and sailors. And I will be on the water following the Comet Race. But I am here to say that the younger generation does not follow these Comets the way we did when I was a younger fellow. And even [the] former Opposition Leader and leader of our party L. Frederick Wade used to be out there on that Comet Race. Who was he out there with, Mr. Speaker? He was out there on the *Mistress*. Who . . . who . . . who were the three people of great prominence in Bermuda on [National] Heroes Day celebrating, following the Comet Race? I would encourage more Members to come out before they go [to] carnival, get a boat, come out there, and follow the Comet Races.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes. *Riches* [was] owned by my good friend Colin Pearman, the late Sir John Swan, and L. Frederick Wade. They were out on the water every year following the Comet Races and being part of the many that were out there every year.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Hotel.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you for—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We cannot be discussing . . . We cannot be discussing . . . We cannot be discussing

hotels, concessions in Bermuda, and not [appreciate] the reason why people come to Bermuda in the first place. The relationships that were formed by Bermudians extended . . . And the Member who asked me that should know that the relationships through music, the relationships through sport, the relationships through families, and the input that Bermudians put into that have a big part in why these hotels can get these concessions. So let them not forget how important it is to invest in the Bermuda product. Let us not forget how important it is to have entertainment.

And let me say this.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And let me say this. That I want to just single out a Bermudian entrepreneur down there who I am sure, because this Government has extended concessions not only to hotels, Minister.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: They go to amenities also, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is right. And Mr. Danny O'Connor down there with Beach Boys and the like putting on some great events and stuff. Let me say the good things that I see happening up in Snorkel Park, which is a little bit . . . We take the ferry, but we need more ferries to bring them up from St. George's there. Let me just say that I appreciate this concession Order.

The Speaker: Where still on the development order right?

[Crosstalk and laughter]

The Speaker: [Would] anybody else would like to make a contribution? None?

Minister, it is you, Minister.

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

And I want to say thank you to the contributions of the Honourable Member from constituency 2, I tell you. We all know of his long-standing history with the tourism industry here in Bermuda. And he is (I will remind people) one of the hard-working directors of the Bermuda Tourism Authority.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Bermuda Tourism Authority does sales and marketing. And this, the investment in properties, is what the Government does so very well, and we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker. So, with that said, I would like to get . . . and answer some of the questions that were asked from the other Honourable Members of this House.

So, the first one was a bit of a clarification as to why the current Order is being revoked, which one creates in adding another 15 years. Well, first, I would like to say that

the first one that they were operating under was actually a 10-year time frame. So, I will start there. And the amendments to the Tourism Investment Act [2017] applied to any new application, i.e., tax relief, has been extended from 10 to 15 years. And this expanded provision allows Bermuda to be more competitive with our neighbours from the south—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: No, it is not added on at all. So, what happens is we have got to stay, as I said in my Statement, competitive.

So, the question is, Why the construction of the eight residences? The original 2020 Order did not include the construction of the eight residences. I think that was your question there. The eight residences are required to be part of the hotel inventory for six months out of the year. So, that is one of the requirements. And they are, therefore, part of the hotel concession relief because of that requirement.

Second, what levels are covered as part of the Management Training programme? This was a question from the Honourable Member King. The Management Training programme covers all levels from lower to middle and upper management levels.

So, with that, I think I have answered the questions that have come from the other side. And, again, to reiterate what my colleague has said, this is part of the greater investment that the Government has said they were going to make and they continue to show, whether it comes to restaurants, whether it comes to attractions and hotels, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, with that, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to His Excellency, the Governor.

The Speaker: Any objections?

The necessary documents will be sent at the appropriate time.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 was approved.]

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

The Speaker: That brings us to a close of that.

The next item on the order paper, [Order] No. 5, has been carried over.

[Order] No. 6, the second reading of the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read for a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present for the consideration of this Honourable House the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026. This Bill amends the Electricity Act 2016 to strengthen Bermuda's energy planning framework, to provide a statutory process for the suspension and reconstitution of the Integrated Resource Plan where the public's interest requires it, and to make consumer affordability protections an expressed requirement of the Integrated Resource Plan.

Mr. Speaker, electricity is woven into every Bermudian life. It keeps the lights on for the senior in Somerset, the refrigerator running for the family in Pembroke, and the doors open for the small business in St. George's. When the cost of power rises, the increase impacts what we can do at the kitchen table and the corner shop, and the monthly budget of every household on this Island.

This Government was elected in 2025 on a mandate of equity and tangible progress. The price, the reliability, and the fairness of electricity sits at the centre of that mandate. Mr. Speaker, the world has reminded us repeatedly and most recently what energy insecurity costs. The war in Ukraine drove fuel prices to historic highs and pushed households across the world into an energy crisis. Attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea disrupted the routes on which traded fuels depend. Tensions in the Middle East move oil markets within hours. Bermuda imports virtually every drop of fuel we burn to generate electricity. Each of these shocks crosses the ocean and arrives through the fuel adjustment on every bill in Bermudian households. We lived through this in 2022 and 2023 when global fuel volatility drove electricity costs sharply upward, and our families carried the burden. For an Island of 21 square miles, more than 600 miles from the nearest coastline, energy security is a national security.

Mr. Speaker, the countries that get their energy transition right gain far more than cleaner power. They stabilise rates and give households and businesses the certainty to plan and to invest. They build local skills, attract capital, and harden their grids against storms that grow stronger and stronger each season. They convert vulnerability into resilience and dependence into self-determination. That is a prize to be won through deliberate planning conducted in the public interest under democratic accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan, commonly referred to as the IRP, is the principal tool used to guide Bermuda's electricity future. It informs decisions on generation, renewable energy, system reliability and long-term energy costs. It is the framework through which Bermuda's energy transition is planned, sequenced, and costed. A sound IRP is the difference between a transition that lowers bills and one that [raises] them.

Successive Governments have made promises to the people of Bermuda about their energy future. And in 2015, the National Electricity Sector Policy set a target of 35 per cent renewable generation by 2035 and laid the foundation for the Electricity Act 2016. In 2019, the Regulatory Authority approved the Integrated Resource Plan that charted an accelerated course towards approximately 85 per cent renewable generation by 2035.

In 2021, [in] the Speech from the Throne, the Government committed to regulations addressing the cost of fuel surcharges for the electricity and to bring legislation enabling renewable energy developers to test their technologies in Bermuda.

In the 2023 Speech from the Throne, delivered weeks after a 20 per cent increase in electricity fees, the Government committed to advance amendments to the regulatory legislation and the Electricity Act 2016 to provide for greater public protections in price determination and implementation. And in the 2025 Speech from the Throne, the Government committed to limit the categories of recoverable expenses that may be passed on to consumers to empower the Regulatory Authority to implement fair pricing on retail electricity tariffs and to review the requirement for mandatory connection to the grid.

Mr. Speaker, it is accepted that there has been no comprehensive refresh of the National Electricity Sector Policy since 2015. Because this is accepted, it is equally met with the determination that it is always the right time to set the path on track.

This year, the Government advanced that work through the National Electricity Sector Policy 2026, which now, having completed consultation, includes clearly and publicly the policy position on the electricity sector: affordability, equity, reliability, and least-cost planning. The question that this Bill invites and is presented before Honourable Members through the amendment is whether the planning in its current machinery of the sector can deliver that policy. The promises of 2021, 2023, and 2025 cannot be made true through the current Integrated Resource Plan process built on the assumptions of another era and misaligned with the policy of the elected Government.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may ask why we have been unable to deliver. Part of this answer lies in the architecture itself. Under the current framework, the Integrated Resource Plan is authored by the utility. We know that the utility is a commercial enterprise who answers lawfully to its shareholders and plans accordingly to its commercial interests. The Regulatory Authority then refines what the utility submits in consultation with the Government's policy. And the Government, which promised the

people relief and better standard of living, holds the responsibility without the statutory means. [That means] three entities, three different objectives, one bill at the end of the month paid by Bermudians.

It should be declared that none of these institutions have acted improperly. The structure itself produced the misalignment, and this Bill corrects it by ensuring that regulatory accountability also considers the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members should also understand what planning machinery costs the people that it serves. The Regulatory Authority, funded by its regulatory fees from the sector, in its own budget published (for 2025/26) an increase of 52 per cent on the prior year. With nearly \$1.6 million allocated to the consulting services in support of the work that includes the development of the IRP. The regulatory fee charged on every kilowatt hour sold has risen from 0.545 cents to 0.855 cents. And the utility may recover it through a dedicated charge on the bill. On the other side of the ledger, the utility's own cost in preparing its IRP proposal, including external consultants and modelling, sits within the regulatory cost base on which tariffs are built. Every dollar of planning on both sides is ultimately paid by the ratepayer.

The analysis underpinning the first IRP estimated that a two-year delay in needed generation could have cost ratepayers \$78.8 million in temporary power alone. A poorly constructed plan locks in generation choices, fuel exposure, and capital commitments for decades. And every misjudgement is paid for month after month on a household bill.

Mr. Speaker, now consider the time. Bermuda's first IRP moved from the utility's proposal in February 2018 to an approved plan in 2019, a cycle roughly of 18 months. The current cycle does tell a different story. The Regulatory Authority requested the proposal from the utility in October 2022. And the deadline for that proposal was extended with ministerial consent to November 2023. The proposal arrived in May 2024. Public consultation was still being extended into September 2025.

When I was appointed into this office in February 2025, more than two years into the cycle, there was not an approved plan. And there is not one today. This Bill is not a sudden shift, but it addresses a process that was already delayed, already out of date and already detached from the promises successive Governments have made to the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, without a pause this Government is denied the means to deliver on its promises. And that is the operational truth this Bill solves. Some have suggested that more money should be spent to finalise and then seek to amend the future IRP. I weighed that argument. But, spending further resources to complete a plan that is misaligned with the Government's stated policy, considers the expansion of technology and studies at the expense of the rate payer towards a confined time frame of 2035—and that timetable would be unfair—runs contrary to affordability and does not serve the public interest.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, the Bill will make the following amendments. It would define the Integrated

Resource Planning process as a process by which the Integrated Resource Plan is requested, submitted, and considered for approval under the Electricity Act 2016. It will insert a new public interest power, enabling the Minister, after consultation and where the statutory test is met, to make an order for the suspension and reconstitution of all or part of the IRP process. It will require the Regulatory Authority and the transmission, distribution, and retail licensee to consider consumer affordability in the integrated resource planning and decision making to ensure that affordability protections form an integral part of the Integrated Resource Plan.

It will provide for the resumption and approval of an Integrated Resource Plan following any suspension and reconstitution of that process. It will amend the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 to recognise that the Minister may have public interest powers in respect of a regulated industry sector where those powers are specified in the Act or sectoral legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it allows the Minister after consulting the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R [Transmission, Distribution and Retail] licensee to make an order to suspend and reconstitute any part of the IRP process but only where the statutory test is met. That test requires the Minister to be satisfied that the continuation of the IRP process would pose a risk to the reliability, sustainability, or affordability of energy supply or that action is necessary to ensure consistency between the Government policy and the proposed Integrated Resource Plan. The Minister must be of the opinion that continuing the process would be contrary to the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, because this power is significant, the Bill includes important safeguards. An IRP suspension order must state the reasons for the order, the period of the suspension, the part or parts of the IRP process that must be constituted, and any directions necessary for the Regulatory Authority to give. The order will be subject to negative resolution procedure, and the period of suspension cannot exceed two years. Before the suspension expires, the Regulatory Authority must issue a notice setting out the IRP process and when it will resume, which parts of the process have been reconstituted, the next steps taken, and any guidance related to that resumption.

The Bill provides for a right of appeal to the Supreme Court for the TD&R licensee or any other person aggrieved by the making of an IRP suspension order. Mr. Speaker, some will suggest this is statutory ministerial interference, but this Bill actually builds a clear national policy, a cohesive planning process answerable to that policy, and a legislative framework that defines specific circumstances in which a Minister may act.

Good governance, Mr. Speaker, is not the absence of ministerial responsibility but rather responsibility exercised through law in the open within limits set by this honourable legislature. A Ministerial Directive on accountability, Mr. Speaker, was issued last year and was not materially integrated into any resource planning. Therefore, it invites the importance of this power tailored to its purpose.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill right sizes the planning process. It is tabled because of today's circumstances, but it is built to outlast them. It will be available to this administration and to every future and hopeful administration that carries a mandate for the Bermudian people so that the elected Government of the day can steer the energy sector in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, from the commencement of this Act, the pace and direction of Bermuda's energy transition will be advanced by single alignment with the policies of the Government that the people chose. It will consider and include our people: the household installing rooftop solar, the renter who depends entirely on the grid, the senior on a fixed income, and the small business watching its operational costs. Their interest expressed through the democratic mandate will set the standard against every plan and is tested on affordability, reliability, and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill opens the next phase of Bermuda's energy reform. In the months ahead, the Government will continue the consultation on amendments that strengthen the Regulatory Authority's ability to ensure fairer retail electricity pricing and greater accountability within the sector. This includes reviewing the categories and expenses that may be properly passed on to consumers and ensures that efficiency or imprudent expenditure cannot simply become a burden carried by Bermudian ratepayers. The people of Bermuda expected a system that rewards efficiency, innovation, and responsible planning. They should never bear unnecessary costs without critique.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will also improve the coordination between the Department of Energy, the Department of Planning, and the Regulatory Authority so that Bermuda can properly forecast, monitor, and manage the growth of distributed generation across the Island while protecting grid stability, systems reliability, and consumer affordability. Bermudians are already investing in rooftop solar, battery storage, and cleaner technologies, and our regulatory systems must evolve with them.

Mr. Speaker, the Government further intends to explore other amendments in the future relating to energy adoption for a more diverse energy future that can be examined responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, all of this work will proceed and all energy programmes of stakeholder engagement and development . . . household installers, the utility, independent producers, the Regulatory Authority, environmental organisations, and the business community will each have a seat in this transition. The Government will weigh the contributions against a single measure, what serves Bermuda and its people.

The people of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, expect an electricity system that is sustainable and decision-making that is affordable and fair. The Government rejects the narrative that Bermuda is too small to modernise its energy system or too limited to pursue greater energy resilience. Affordability and sustainability are connected objectives, and every reform we advance is rooted in one principle, that

Bermuda's energy future must serve Bermuda and its people first.

Mr. Speaker, brick by brick, reform by reform, this Government is building a modern energy framework that is more accountable, more sustainable, more consumer focused, and more resilient to the global pressures that increasingly test island nations. This work will take time, and the direction is clear. We are building an energy future that Bermuda's next generation will inherit with confidence. This Bill is a practical and necessary step in that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Robinson, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to my colleagues and the listening audience.

First of all, I would like to commend the Minister on being open for dialogue prior to this tabling and also open to questions. So, I just want the public to know that she did endeavour to make that link and that there is collaboration there, and I think that should be celebrated.

I understand through discussions and reading and listening to the Minister's brief that the intention of this amendment is in a good place. The intentions of it to work towards affordability for Bermudians is something that we would support on this side. However, there do seem to be a few unintended consequences in this legislation that I would like to highlight to the Minister and to the listening public.

What is concerning to me is that this particular legislation, or amendment that has come forward, seems to allude to the fact that somehow the IRP proposal has put Government and experts on seemingly . . . I do not want to say opposing sides, but [there] seem to be differences there in the way forward when all three parties should be weighing in on this IRP process from beginning to end. So, I would like to ask the Minister how the difference formed to such an extent to where this amendment seemed to be necessary in order to course correct the IRP in her interest . . . well in her Statement as the public interest to correct this IRP. So, I want to know how that divide seems to have come between the experts, what they have suggested, and Government's particular mandate.

Affordability is already enshrined in the current Electricity Act 2016. It is under the purpose of the Act. It already lists things like innovation and affordability. So, seeing in this amendment that it has created a section that says "in the interest of affordability," seems a bit like a duplication of efforts. So, I am wondering. Does the Minister not feel that the current Electricity Act 2016 which enshrines affordability has yielded suitable results that has led to, now, what seems like a secondary layer on top of an independent body and a Regulatory Authority?

The Minister also has the ability in the current Electricity Act 2016 to make Ministerial declarations and give

Ministerial directions. So again, I wonder if this is a duplication of abilities. And what is the difference between the Ministerial order, which in this amendment is stated to be different than that of Ministerial directions and Ministerial declarations that already exist in the Electricity Act [2016]?

The Minister did mention in her brief that some may say that this is ministerial interference. I would be one of those "some people." I believe that this is, in my humble opinion, a ministerial overreach though with good intentions. Again, I support things that will make Bermuda affordable for Bermudians. And I think everybody who goes anywhere will hear their constituents, aunts, uncles, families, [and] spouses complaining about their BELCO bill and the cost of energy in this Island. And I think that is the price of being remote and disconnected from most things.

I think there is not anybody who would argue against lower electricity and energy bills. However, this particular amendment may cause the opposite effect because as this is currently, this entire process is paid for by the rate payer. These potential suspensions could indeed lead to higher bills due to spooking investors, due to giving the illusion that the Regulatory Authority may not be as separated from Government's reach as it should be. And that sort of fear will translate into folks being potentially (because I cannot read the future, but potentially) less willing to invest in infrastructure where ministerial overreach tends to give certain folks the illusion of kickbacks, or not fair assessments of investment. And that is something that we cannot afford, especially with this important sector.

And let me clarify, *illusion* of kickbacks. I am not accusing the Minister of giving kickbacks. I am just saying that when you have investors who believe that Government is playing a larger role in an independent regulatory body, those sorts of things can come up, where folks feel like the independent body may not be as independent as we would like it to be. So, I think we have to avoid anything that may give that impression, not just locally but internationally as well for our credibility as a jurisdiction.

The Integrated Resource Plan is stringently laid out in the Electricity Act [2016], and I have a few concerns on amending that IRP process. Number one [is] the ability to suspend and reconstitute the IRP process. I wonder if this was subject to consultation from the Regulatory Authority on how that may impact the implementation of our Integrated Resource Plan, how that may affect our long-term energy sustainability and also consultation with the energy supplier, how investors or investment may take to this particular amendment, and whether or not Bermudians are being safeguarded from any potential fallout of this amendment when it comes to their energy affordability, sustainability, and reliability.

A lot of us do have complaints about BELCO and the cost. But the reliability of our grid is extremely high. I believe it was quoted to me [as] over 90 per cent. So, we cannot unintentionally jeopardise that for future generations in our bid as legislators to bring about our platform, our mandates, and our plans. There is a reason why this separation of Government and the Regulatory Authority was

made because not always do Government's intentions align with the sustainability and future planning of the jurisdiction.

We are temporary. We are not forever. And experts [who] live, eat, and breathe this, are planning years in advance to be able to keep Bermuda competitive and reliable and our energy supply undisrupted. So if the IRP proposal was vetted by experts in BELCO, vetted by experts within the RA, and I have been told vetted by the University of Edinburgh, why now, after potentially seven years (but correct me if I am wrong) do we now want to come forward seven years later and potentially put a pause on a process that has been running . . . that has cost numerous amounts of funds to the ratepayer? And what is going to be the fallout of that?

So, I have a few questions here.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: What is the estimated cost of this suspension, potential suspension? Because delays have cost. I would like to know what analysis was done on the potential cost of the suspension on the Bermudian public and if there is an estimated amount. Has an analysis been done on the potential impact on Bermudian bills?

How would a suspension affect our progress on our investment and future energy sustainability?

Does the Minister anticipate legal disputes to result from a potential suspension or reconstitution of the IRP?

I recommend that the Minister utilise the powers that are already granted under the Electricity Act [2016] because right now what we are weighing is affordability versus reliability. And as politicians, I think both sides, we like to get up and say that we want to make things affordable and cheaper for Bermudians. And I think that is a just cause. And I think most times we are aligned on that, maybe not the road to get there, but we are aligned on that as a goal. However, we cannot allow our pursuit of this and our policies to jeopardise future reliability and sustainability of our energy grid.

There are some things that can be done. Land can be earmarked. I believe that that has been an issue after talking to a few experts of being able to have land earmarked to utilise solar, to utilise wind, and to unlock potential in [the] ocean. And I believe that the Government is moving in that direction, and I commend that. But those are some of the things that we can do currently without jeopardising potential investment and potential reliability for Bermudians as a whole.

So, with those comments, I reserve more for Committee. But thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?

MP Linda Smith, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, am concerned about this being considered a bit of ministerial overreach that could extend the timeline of the process, causing not only delays and additional costs

but also reputational risk and the potential for political interference.

The IRP process is one that is pretty well established in most democracies as a way of going about regulating the utilities. So, it is fairly standard. And the process is that the utility is required to put together an Integrated Resource Plan that normally takes somewhere in the region of two to maybe three years for them to develop. And they develop it in consultation with the RA, who is always looking over their shoulder. And the RA is driven and guided by the energy department and Government policy. And so, all those things are always coming together as this is continually being weighted.

It is a very highly technical process. It is a very cumbersome process, and it is a very expensive process. So, the utility hires a number of consultants who cover all kinds of things from energy economics to financial economics, supply and demand, energy sources, commodity pricing. There is a ton of stuff that goes into the data that is collected and the collating of that data to help tell a story, which may indicate what are some of the best options for Bermuda given its unique qualities.

So, when you take a look at the integrated resource process, like I said, it is a long process. It can take between two and three years, and sometimes longer if there are a lot of complications involved in it. And it is planning for a timeline that is even longer than that because by the time there is agreement on a way forward, then you also have to go out and procure the equipment that you are going to use. You have to bring in the investors to invest the money. You have to have the equipment built, particularly for the Bermuda market because we do not take things off the shelf because we are too small. So oftentimes these things are built specifically for us, so there is a time lag in that. And then, of course, the investor wants to know that their investment is secure, that the project is going to go ahead as they had planned at a cost that they had projected at a budget that is well-regulated, that it is going to work in the end, and that they are going to get a return on their investment.

So, turning the tap on and off on the integrated resource process is really not something that is easy to do, and it certainly is not something that is inexpensive to do.

Taking a look at the Electricity Amendment Act 2026, it does speak specifically to affordability in the purpose of the Act, and it also speaks to affordability, reliability, and sustainability. Those are three values that the Regulatory Authority needs to balance and make sure that the utility is balancing to ensure that the costs are not going to be higher than people can afford. The utility does not want that either, because they want to get their bills paid. They want to keep their customers on the grid. And also, that the fuel options are going to be there, they are going to be sustainable, they are going to be affordable going into the future. But the energy policy also provides a transition to what will be the technologies for the future.

So, there is a lot involved in this, and turning that process on and off for reasons that are really quite difficult to understand in this amendment that has been brought

forward, as there is no specific criteria or definition as to what would cause the Minister to suspend the IRP process . . . What specifically?

And also, [what is] the specific definition of being able to prove that the decisions that are being made and the options being put forward are in the best interest of affordability? Because it is affordability not *versus* reliability, but affordability, reliability, and sustainability. You want people to be able to afford it. You want to make sure it is going to be there when you need it. And you want to make sure that it will continue to operate for the period that you expect, so there's a return on the investment, and the investors will come back again and reinvest in infrastructure in Bermuda.

So, my concern is, one, turning on and off the tap on the IRP, given all the complexities of it, does not seem like a very feasible thing to do. The Regulatory Authority is expected to be an independent, qualified board of people that can look at the IRP. They can look at it with their consultants and with their subject matter experts that they have brought in, and they can make recommendations. They can go back to the utility multiple times and work with them. They have energy policy that has been brought forth by Government that drives the construct of what Government is looking for in terms of the value proposition. So, I am not entirely sure what defines what is trying to be achieved with this amendment. And I would like to hear more about that.

But it is very concerning. And then also at the end of the day, if there is ministerial interference or suspension of the IRP process . . . and two years seems a long time to have that as the extent to which that could last, because two years is almost long enough to negate a lot of the work and the inputs that have gone into the IRP process, because many of the inputs in the IRP process are volatile. So, they change with demographics, they change with commodity prices, they change with future prices, they change with business cycles.

So, there are all these economic aspects that need to be put into the equation, and the longer the IRP sits on the shelf waiting for some determination the more insignificant and less credible the inputs become. So, it just causes the entire process to become less and less reliable.

I would like to hear, as I said, what the definition is of a provision to show that the IRP is considering affordability versus what is already happening today, and any other specifications that would help us to understand what the goal and what the objective is of this amendment we are being asked to consider.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Smith.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Hayward, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make an intervention.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the submissions by the Members of the Opposition pertaining to the Bill that we have in front of us today, a Bill that would allow for the assurance that there is an alignment between what is in the country's best interest from a Government perspective versus a plan that is set out by industry.

The Integrated Resource Plan [IRP] is developed by industry. The plan is developed and designed by the industry. If it was not, and Government had greater intervention in how that plan was actually developed, there would be no need for the Minister to seek to have intervention through legislation. As elected officials, our job is to ensure we are looking out for the best interest of whom? It's the residents of Bermuda. So, if we want to ensure that, then the Government develops a clear set of objectives and policies that ensure that we get the best outcome for the people of Bermuda.

How long do we grapple with . . . Bermuda pays some of the highest electricity costs in the world. We continue to complain about this year after year after year. But want to engage in the exact same activities that lead to the exact same outcomes.

The Government wants to ensure that electricity is affordable for the people of Bermuda. The Ministry of Home Affairs has set out an entire vision for consultation. In that vision, it has affordability. It has reliability. It has equity. It has low-cost planning, transition to renewable innovation and electrification, accountability and oversight. How do we ensure all of these are built into the IRP? How do we ensure what is happening now as it pertains to the development of that IRP? It takes into consideration the vision of the Government of Bermuda as it pertains to the future energy needs and utilisation in Bermuda.

I think it's important for us to understand that this is not Government intervention to provide preference to one industrial company over another. This is to ensure that Bermuda and the people of Bermuda get the best outcome. All of this talk about kickbacks and things of that nature is misleading and uncalled for. It is not in alignment with what is trying to be achieved.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Point of order, please.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Minister is misleading the House.

There was nothing said in terms of someone receiving kickbacks. It said when you do things like this, it creates the *illusion* of a kickback. And in fact, the Honourable Member, MP Robinson, also added clarification to it. So that was given. The Minister is now misleading the House.

The Speaker: What is . . . I guess, the point they are trying to make is that they did not imply, they didn't say kickback

was given. They are saying it can *imply* that there was a kickback being given.

Hon. Jason Hayward: In fairness, I never said that. But utilising those words, just mentioning some words, creates that bridge to a connection between what we are doing and some nefarious action. And I am saying that's incorrect and improper in the context in which the Minister presented this.

The Minister presented this in terms of what is in the best interest of the Bermuda people. How do we create greater alignment between the Government and industry? How do we ensure that the plan in which industry is building out as pertains to the future energy needs takes into consideration what's in the best interest of the people of Bermuda?

If we are moving forward with consultation and a vision for Bermuda's future energy needs, how does that get incorporated into the plan that is already being produced?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. And I've heard the question a few times. The Minister is misleading the House.

These things that the Minister is speaking of are already in the Electricity Act: affordability, innovation, and the like. So, I don't understand why he's presenting it to this House as though those things are not already in the remit.

The Speaker: I think he's building his argument, his presentation on where he's going to deliver.

Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, if you were to be naïve enough to believe that industry doesn't want to ensure that it maintains and maximises profits . . . that is the principal aim of the shareholders of the electricity company. They want to ensure that they maximise their profits on behalf of their shareholders. We want to ensure that the people of Bermuda don't get shafted in this process. We want to ensure—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: [Point of order], Mr. Speaker. The Minister is continuing to mislead the House.

This IRP process has public consultation and is approved by the Regulatory Authority. What he is suggesting, the Honourable Minister is suggesting—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: No, he can give his point of order.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Come on, man.

Hon. Jason Hayward: What is the point of order?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The point of order is that the Minister is misleading the House. The public has consultation . . . to say that the interest of the people is not represented . . . people can literally represent themselves in this IRP process. To say that it is meant to preserve cost, the RA is there to facilitate making sure that the cost and the affordability for Bermudians is managed. So, what it sounds like, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister is saying the RA isn't capable of doing that.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister . . . what the Member is trying to clarify is that the structure—

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me ask another question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Who is the Member sitting in this House speaking on behalf of?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: My constituents.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Because it seems as though he's speaking on behalf of either the Regulator or the company.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me finish my sentence. Let me—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It's imputing improper . . . I am not letting you finish that, Minister.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: You are imputing improper motives.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.
First of all—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: He knows what he's doing!

The Speaker: —I have to accept your point of order, okay? Don't get all riled up over it. Don't get riled up. Don't get riled up. Don't get riled up.

Minister, continue your vein. Clarify where you are going and it should be okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me ask another question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: How can a Member of this House say that the people don't need you to represent them as their representative, they can represent themselves in this process?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is the second time that the Minister is imputing improper motive, and misquoted me in a debate. As a Minister with the responsibility he has, please make sure that the debate is accurate. [I] never said that. And he should retract it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: For clarity on that point, I don't believe what you said was that they don't need representation. I think what you said was that the structure of the regulation, the Regulatory Authority, provides the room for—

An Hon. Member: Public consultation.

The Speaker: —the consultation that a member of the public can make.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

The Speaker: I don't think the Minister was saying that the Members up here don't need to represent their constituents.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I don't think that is what he was saying.

He was saying that what he's doing on his feet is speaking to the fact that the representation that comes from this floor in reference to the concerns of the constituents or the public in these matters, when it comes to that. Both are there to help . . . both are there to help the public: the voice that you bring, the voice that he brings, and the guidelines and the regulations.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that clarification.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Government released an energy plan. That energy plan then set out a number of tenets that we want to ensure are built in any process moving forward when we begin to discuss Bermuda's energy needs.

Again, to reiterate, we are up here in this House of Assembly saying that we want to ensure that our future energy supply remains affordable to the people of Bermuda.

An Hon. Member: We all agree with that.

Another Hon. Member: Everybody agrees.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, tick.

We want to ensure that it's also reliable.

An Hon. Member: We agree!

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, we can collectively tick on that. We want to ensure that there's equity—

An Hon. Member: Of course.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —so that people are not locked out of the grid or left without energy.

An Hon. Member: Maybe as an independent regulator.

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, I guess that's a collective tick. We want to ensure that there's low-cost planning as well.

An Hon. Member: You are on Kim Swan's wicket.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: We want to ensure that we have a proper transition to renewables. We want to ensure that there is innovation in electrification.

An Hon. Member: Okay, yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Tick, everybody agrees with that.

An Hon. Member: Tick, tick.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We also want to ensure that there is accountability and oversight. And that's a tick as well.

Several Hon. Members: By whom?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Right?

An Hon. Member: You say Minister; we say Regulatory Authority.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And then we want to ensure that there is interdepartmental cooperation.

An Hon. Member: Which departments are we talking about?

Another Hon. Member: Energy—

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, Planning, Energy, Workforce Development, they are all listed in the consultation document—

An Hon. Member: Can you read it?

Hon. Jason Hayward: —if one was to read it.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: It's dry.

Another Hon. Member: It's really dry.

Hon. Jason Hayward: But, Mr. Speaker, if we agree with all those principles, the Minister is simply saying that this Government, we don't want to leave it up to just simply public consultation. We want to ensure—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We want to ensure that what is produced is in alignment with those tenets that we all collectively agree with. And, as a result of that, the Minister is justified in her actions with bringing this Bill forward to ensure we get the best outcomes for the people of Bermuda. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? Thank you, Minister.
MP Fahy.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister certainly has encapsulated perhaps 90 per cent of what we can all agree on. So, well done. Great, great, great wicket.

Then he suggests in his final remarks that the Regulatory Authority can't do their job. Because that's what it sounds like.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That is what it sounds like.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Member is deliberately misleading the House.

An Hon. Member: No, no.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I think just now when I tried to make an interjection, I was basically trying to clear that point up. I think what MP Robinson was saying and what the Minister was saying was basically looking out for the interests of the public from both perspectives.

The Regulatory Authority does what it does and the position that the Minister was saying just now on his feet was a similar buffer to make sure that the public's interest is protected.

I wouldn't say that they are saying neither one can't do the job, or the other is weak in its job. It is a support system that makes sure that both . . . the best interest is looked after from different perspectives.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that it can be inferred, okay, that the Regulatory Authority perhaps can't do it as capably as a Minister because that's what this Bill is doing.

This Bill is essentially saying the Minister can suspend or reconstitute the IRP that is done in heavy consultation with the Regulatory Authority and the utility. It is quite correct, as the Minister has stated, that it is put together and drafted by the utility company.

And I don't think there's anyone on this side of the House or that side of the House or anyone in Bermuda that is going to say that there is something wrong, that BELCO is this amazing company and we are all happy. No, people are not. We all agree on that.

An Hon. Member: And we do.

Hon. Michael Fahy: We all agree on that.

But the Government seems to believe that the only way or one of the best ways in which to lower electricity costs is to have a Minister give directions in a way through the Act.

Let's read this. This is . . . if I may, Mr. Speaker, this is from the Government's website giving a very brief blurb on what the Regulatory Authority of Bermuda is. It's "an independent regulatory body, mandated to promote fair business practices, protect consumer[s] and industry stakeholders, and encourage innovation and [integrity] of the electronic communications, electricity and subsea sectors."

It's to take into account consumer protection and make sure that costs are as low as they can. Are we satisfied? No. Okay? We're not.

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Hon. Michael Fahy: But we say that the Regulatory Authority is the proper place for that to be undertaken to protect the consumer of Bermuda.

There are other ways in which you can make sure or encourage the Regulatory Authority to continue going down a road of ensuring better costs for consumers.

Now, I have on those notes some very simple questions for the Minister that I really hope that she will address and advise the people of Bermuda what her next steps will be when this Bill passes, because it will pass unless the backbench of the Government miraculously does something different than we expect. But it will pass and there's got to be something that the Minister intends to do immediately after this Bill passes in respect of the powers that she will then have. Okay?

Perhaps the Minister can share with this Honourable House what she intends to do.

So, does the Minister intend, once this Bill passes, to suspend or reconstitute the IRP? Which parts and for how long and why? There has to be a plan. You don't just bring this forward on a whim. You bring it forward because there's a next step.

Now, you have a utility company that is putting together this IRP and you may recall, gosh, it must have been 15, 16 months ago. I stood up here and asked about why it was taking so long. We were told *there's lots of collaboration, it's still coming. It's not late.*

Well, it is. The Minister has pretty much said it's not out there. This thing, I think the last one is 2018.

So, we now have a problem because we are going to be passing something eventually here with no knowledge of what's really going to come next. So, I think it's incumbent upon the Minister to answer those questions.

How quickly after this Bill passes will the Minister issue an order or directive pursuant to the Act (and I'll repeat it) to suspend or reconstitute the IRP, which parts and for how long? Okay?

And in respect of the public interest test, she should also explain how any potential changes or potential . . . excuse me, potential directives or orders that she's going to give to reconstitute or suspend the IRP is in the public interest. Explain it so we can all understand. And maybe when we hear that, maybe our honourable friend on the other side, Minister Hayward, MP Hayward, maybe we will agree. You never know.

But let's get some more information. I doubt it; but you never know. But we need the information. It's not enough to just come here and say we are better than everyone else.

An Hon. Member: Nobody said that.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Well, that's what it certainly appears like, because you're putting a Minister into the picture. And what the Minister said in her presentation is, okay, this is a power for any future government, any government that wants to be, any other party that wants to become a government, or words to that effect.

It's a dangerous precedent when you have that ministerial potential, what is seen as interference, based on what may just be political expediency for the moment of the day. Because the public interest test is not really set out. And what my prediction will be, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be legal action by the utility company, most likely in the event that there is this suspension or reconstitution of the IRP.

It seems to me that if the Government is so intent on all the collaboration that they seem to think they're so very good at, that they should be sitting down more wholesomely, more often with the Regulatory Authority and the utility and get all of them together in the room and come up with the plan that seems to be the best for the people of Bermuda. Not simply to say, *well, if you don't do what we say, you're going to be directed to do what we say.* That's not acceptable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

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

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Shadow Minister Dwayne Robinson, MP, has already spoken pretty authoritatively to this Bill and so I just want to add a few quick points.

I am going to go back to the former speaker from the other side, Minister Hayward, and his ticks where we agree. Look, we all want lower energy costs. Right? Tick. That's the starting point.

We all want reliable energy costs.

An Hon. Member: Tick.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Tick. We agree there. Why? Well, it impacts on all our lives, and to a degree we don't even realise or think about. You know? Take a hurricane, right? How many days is your electricity gone? You're sitting in your house, the water stops running, the fridge isn't working, that mobile phone runs out of juice, even if you've got several batteries stored away. Imagine that amplified over a period of time that's a week, two weeks, three weeks, a month. Right?

So, we all want reliable, low-cost energy. Tick. Okay?

The debate between the Opposition and the Government is: How do we achieve this?

And indeed, and I'll say this, it does also appear to be a debate between the Ministry and the Regulatory Authority because we say the correct vehicle to solve this problem is the Regulatory Authority, the independent Regulatory Authority. And we say the correct vehicle to solve this problem is not, with the greatest respect to the Minister (I don't mean this in a personal capacity. I'd say it about any Minister of the Government.) . . . is not through the Minister grabbing the wheel.

Now, just for the benefit of the listening public, because this can be confusing. This is a complicated topic. I accept it. I am confused all the time.

IRP, what does it actually mean? Integrated Resource Plan. So, when I use the expression IRP, I'm talking about Bermuda's Integrated Resource Plan for Energy. And it's important that word "integrated" because a lot of people contributed to this Plan, which I think was 2018 or thereabouts. A lot . . . 2019. I am grateful for the Minister's correction. It was 2019.

A lot of people—and with respect to the Honourable Minister—not just industry, this big demon of industry. Sure, of course the utility will have contributed to the Integrated Resource Plan, but so did the public. So did Greenrock. So did a number of entities and people. And I believe, as my colleague, I think it was MP Robinson mentioned, even the University of Edinburgh contributed to the IRP.

And so, if we are going to press the pause button . . . actually let me back up.

If this House is going to pass a Bill changing the law to allow the Minister to intervene to press the pause button on the IRP, there had better be a pretty damn good reason and no obvious alternative solution.

And we say there is an obvious alternative solution, mainly the independent Regulatory Authority whose job it is to do this.

Now, my colleague, MP Linda Smith, explained how the IRP all came together. And I don't need to go back over that ground. But the simple point is the IRP was prepared by experts. Now, I accept as much as the next person, [it] doesn't mean an expert is always right. Sometimes experts can be wrong, too. But most of the time, given a choice between an elected politician who is a part-time politician who may not be a subject matter expert, and the experts who have taken a long time and a lot of money to prepare an IRP, I think perhaps we might want to look to the experts. Again, it doesn't mean they're always right.

I also make the point, because I'm getting some chirping from Minister Hayward, but let's not forget that since 2018, the former Home Affairs Minister, who used to sit right over there, and I know this because I was the Shadow. I was MP Rabain's Shadow, Minister Rabain's Shadow [Minister]. He didn't stand up and rail against the IRP. Indeed, he endorsed the IRP. So, there is a departure here.

There is a volte-face that's going on.

So, again, how do we differ? Because, thank you, Minister Hayward, you identified a number of points where we agree. And it's odd, because the listening public seem to think we never agree in this House, but we often do. In fact, most of the Bills today, I think we agreed on.

But on this Bill, we don't agree.

And we don't agree, because what do we say should happen? Well, conveniently, the One Bermuda Alliance answered the question as to what should happen, and we did so almost three years ago.

Three years ago, we brought forward a proposal on how to bring down energy costs. We invited the PLP Government, under a different Minister, I accept, under a different former Deputy Premier as well, to come back in the House and to pass legislation to give better teeth to the RA.

We did so after we asked the RA to meet with us. And a delegation from the One Bermuda Alliance, including a number of the MPs sitting here with me today, went and had a very long meeting with the RA, at which we were told we (the RA) do not have sufficient regulatory power under our existing statute to have the teeth to control energy prices with regard to affordability protections—the phrase that the Minister used in her speech.

They said, we do not have that power.

And so, quite rightly, as my colleague, [MP] Dwayne Robinson has already observed, what should we do? Well, we said, let's amend the Regulatory Act. Let's give them sufficient power to take into account affordability protection. And take that in hand with the fact, as my colleague, [MP] Dwayne Robinson, already observed, that the

Electricity Act itself has reference to affordability protection, or words similar to that.

So, what we said was, *Come back into the House, and we will agree with you. Let's amend the Regulatory Act to give the independent Regulatory Authority greater powers so that they can take into account accountability issues, accountability protections.* Because if someone is going to take that decision, it really should be the independent Regulatory Authority and, with respect, not any Minister of the Government. It's not for the Minister to grab the wheel.

And so, when in her speech the Minister anticipated accusations of allegations of ministerial interference, she was right to do so. And indeed, this is ministerial interference. It is a Bill that is going to give the Minister the power, not only to stop the IRP for a two-year period, with consultation, fairly, but also to reverse some or all aspects of the IRP. And we can get into that language in Committee. And we just do not think that is the right way to do things. You do not buy a dog and bark yourself. You do not create an independent Regulatory Authority and people it with some very strong people (and the Government appoints many of the commissioners of the RA), and then decide, actually, better to get a Minister to decide this.

My third point, Mr. Speaker, is [that] the danger here is a very political (small "p," political) danger. We, as politicians, want to solve the Island's problems. We want to solve our constituents' problems, and we want to do so as quickly as we can. The problem is that some problems are complicated. They are difficult, and they require long-term solutions to get where you want to go. And so, we have this sort of what I call "microwave society." We want everything, "bing," in 40 seconds or 30 seconds. I am confident that with the best intentions that this Honourable Minister wants to bring down the cost of energy, and she wants more reliable energy. I do not undermine her motive in any way. I'm confident.

But I do respectfully say that the solution she is proposing in this legislation is not the right solution. Give more powers to the RA. You will have our support for that.

And I also respectfully say that you must look beyond the first layer of consequence, because the history of Government interference in business is not a happy one. Still less is it a happy history when it is Government interference in regulated entities. And it is even less a happy situation when it is interference in regulated entities that are also utilities. Right? Because these are public sector, and this is the sole public sector utility, more or less. And so that is a . . . it has really not worked out well, historically.

And let us just, again, my crystal ball is just as cloudy as anyone else's in here. But let us look in that crystal ball. And I know my colleague, MP Robinson, and indeed MP Fahy, and indeed MP Linda Smith, started to look in their crystal ball. What do we think is going to happen if we pass this Bill and the Minister grabs the wheel? Okay? It is possible the Minister will solve the problems, and energy costs will come crumbling down, and reliability will be shooting up, and everybody will be happy, and the Minister will be praised by both sides of the aisle. That is possible.

It is also highly improbable, because this is not an easy solution that is going to be solved overnight with the snap of a ministerial finger, with the grab of the wheel.

There are agreements in place with the utility provider. There are agreements that have the involvement of the Regulatory Authority. So let us suppose that the stop bell is pressed by the Minister. And let us suppose that aspects of the IRP are reversed. Otherwise, why give yourself a power if you do not intend to use it? And let us suppose that the Minister, having grabbed the wheel, drives into this very complicated debate. You are brave—not wise, but brave—to try to solve the problem. It is not an easily solvable one.

And again, let us look beyond the first and second layers of consequence, and see what is going to happen. How is this going to play out? Well, one of my colleagues has already mentioned that there might be a lawsuit because there is an agreement in place, and there is the ARC, and they have their rate of return. And if that starts to dip below a certain point on the ARC, they are not going to be terribly happy about that. And they will hire those dreaded things called lawyers, and they will come up with the Government of Bermuda, and ultimately, if the Government of Bermuda loses a lawsuit, who pays? The Bermudian taxpayer. So that is not helpful.

How else might it play out? Well, they might say, *Okay, you are denying us our rate of return that we agreed on, so we have to cut back on costs,* and we are going to see job losses. Well, none of us wants that. Agreed, "tick." Nobody wants job losses. So that is how it could play out. Or, they could simply say, *Well, fine, we will take the hit, the financial hit. But we are going to withdraw our capital investment, having taken the hit.*

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of information.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: And I do think that the Honourable Member, though well-intended, is steering from the substance of today's debate. We are not talking about capital investment. We are not talking about the rate of return, but simply a process, a regulated process, namely, the Integrated Resource Plan. I do invite the Honourable Member to keep his contribution focused to that. Otherwise, it is unintentionally misleading the House.

The Speaker: It is not . . . I would not say it is misleading the House. We are in the House, which means the discussion can be broader. And it is talking about some of the impacts of how they could respond. He is not going down the clauses. If you are on the Committee, none of that would be allowed. But some way of broadness is allowed in presenting it, as long as he keeps it tied to the Bill, the content of the Bill, and he keeps tying it to the content.

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

And I am very happy to reiterate that what I was doing was looking in what I call the cloudy crystal ball and looking at potential consequences, looking at the second or third or fourth move on the chess board if [the] Government interferes with the current situation.

Am I right that these are going to happen? Who knows? I do not know. But these are just—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I mean, [Minister] Hayward is laughing. But if you are going to take a decision, you have got to look at [what] the consequences are of that decision.

I mean, again, I want to be very clear. I am not being personal to the Minister. I think it is very brave of you to wade into this topic. I think it is a very dangerous topic to wade into. I think it is very unwise when you have an independent regulator. But if you are going to grab the wheel and you are going to drive in, you have got to start to think, *Well, how are the corresponding parties going to react?* And I am sure the Minister's given thought to that. And I am just suggesting how some of them may react.

And by the way, I do not think it is a crazy suggestion to say that if the rate of return of the sole regulator of the Island goes down because of a ministerial intervention by legislation, that they do not sue. I think that is not a crazy suggestion. And who pays for that? The taxpayer would pay for that.

But let us take a lesser example, right? Instead of putting the capital into the business that they put in, they might put in lesser capital. And again, I reference job losses. I do think that that is a legitimate consideration. We should at least be worried, will there be? How do we avoid there being?

Another possibility, sporadic service, less reliability, brownouts, right? We do not want to become an Island where that happens. And we said [there might be] a possible lawsuit. And again, the point I am making is that the history of Government intervention into business is not a happy one. I think that is really all I need to say, Mr. Speaker, beyond this.

This is a difficult topic. And when faced with a difficult topic, you need to step back. And the instincts of all politicians, and I think it is fair for me to attribute to them, but all politicians are usually short-term. How do I keep the voter happy? How do I, you know, get through the next election? How do I survive my ministerial portfolio until the ministerial portfolio changes on me? You know, how can I make the best decisions? But these are all short-term decisions, right? And what we want is a long-term decision. Because when you are planning energy for a jurisdiction, you have got to look out 10, 20, 30 years. And you have got to see, you know, what that looks like. And that is why we have Integrated Resource Plans.

As I say, I accept it is complicated. I appreciate, and I want to make very clear that my comments about ministerial interference are not unique to this Minister. I just think it is a very dangerous road to go down. As they say, the road to ruin is paved with good intentions. And I am quite confident that her intentions in reducing prices and trying to get greater reliability are pure. But I think that the Minister is doing something that is unlikely to help greatly. It would be better to put this in the hands of the Independent Regulatory Authority. And moreover, not only is it unlikely to help, but it may well do greater harm.

And for those reasons, as my colleagues have already stated, we would not support this Bill

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few notes. I think that the OBA has articulated its position relatively well.

As far as [the] solution is concerned, I would concur that more powers to the Authority would probably and more likely be the better route. And after several of us have gone through the Bill, I guess we will get to [it] in some of these clauses, but it is hard to differentiate between what is in the Bill and what is new. Much of what is in the Bill is already happening. And so there is this grey area of, okay, well, for the Minister, special powers. A lot of this stuff is already happening, and the involvement is already there.

As far as an integrated plan is concerned, I do not think that this is a new concept in Bermuda or around the world. This is something that puts together all players in the field and tries to come up with a long-term plan. It does seem a bit like we are trying to fix an immediate situation, an immediate cry to high prices, when we did not get to this point overnight. And we are not going to get out of it overnight. So, a quick stay on pricing is a bit problematic, as we heard today in statements talking about fuel. Okay, well, fine, you know, we are going to hold the prices. But we are also going to promise the importer that we will make them whole. And we could not even get clear answers this morning about how that is happening.

The Minister mentioned in one of her statements, I am looking for the note here where the intent was to make sure and ensure that businesses are made whole, and that we must work in tandem and not against one another. So, again, this grey area between too much involvement has this unintended consequence. And I spoke about it this morning. That unintended consequence is interest that we, the taxpayer, would have to pay later on down the road. Not right now, but later on down the road they may have to pay. And I gave the example of when BELCO did assist and help Bermuda. But that money must be paid back with interest. Now, we were told that, you know, we have learned our lessons, but no one wants to give any specifics. And so, all we are asking for is more specifics to exactly how this is going to work. You know? And why should we trust the process?

Take a look at local business right now. We are making a big fuss about BELCO, who, quite frankly, is probably close to 100 per cent is Bermudian-hired, who quite frankly, great jobs, good salaries, good benefits. Mercy, if you became a CEO back in the day, these benefits were incredible. Now, what we are talking about is risking some of these unintended consequences of ministerial involvement. Not to say that it is going to cause this, but there are unintended consequences. Because anyone bringing their investment to the Island, or any Bermudian putting their investment in local business, wants to know that it can thrive.

And the . . . I mean, I sat down with the Authority, myself, Scott, and a few others, several years ago looking at the formulary that is being used. And it is quite a science. And it is nothing new. It is done all around the world to ensure that fair pricing happens. It is the same thing in other industries, like insurance industries, that there is a fair return involved. All of these things are happening.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do not see any legislation coming forward to Allshores, and I have complained about that on enough times. But yet, we are here now regulating. I am just using it as an example. So, if we are to trust the process, you know, we should be applying it across the board. On one hand, other businesses get away with all kinds of things. On this hand, here we are screaming about it, and we are saying we need to have more involvement in the process. And we have no involvement in other industries, major industries. But we have involvement here, where a Minister can sit down with the Authority and go through the sensitivities of where we need to be.

My honourable colleague talked about these unintended consequences. You know, lawsuits potentially, loss of jobs, benefits, fair salaries, and the like. And not to mention, now, I mean, it has changed hands. Now, that business will have to consider if they have more involvement in this process, which they all agreed on. Everyone at the table agreed on this whole process with the Regulatory Authority back some time ago, 2018, I guess it was, whenever it was.

We agreed to the process: *Get this Regulatory Authority involved and let's start looking at an integrated plan and let's start looking at all of the processes in a fair return.* If we start messing with that fair return . . . and I am talking about from experience with the Government. If we are going to talk about fair equity . . . people do not mind investing, but they've got to get that money back, just like anyone in this room if it owns a business. If it is putting its money into something and investing it, it is a sacrifice, then at some point in time, it is going to be looking for a return.

And so, I have not heard yet where the Authority has not been able to provide fair and equitable returns for everyone, and rate. What we have heard is that the public is saying that the prices are going up, and they are increasing, and we have got to find a way to stop that, to arrest it. Whatever that is. So, what we are trying to do now is immediately address a cry when there is a long-term plan to fixing that. [If] you get in debt for a billion dollars, it takes a while to pay down the billion dollars.

So, here we are now in a pickle, and we are trying to say, *Okay, look, you know, we better not get any more increases in these rates.* But somebody is going to have to sacrifice. Okay, fair enough, yes, businesses need to sacrifice just like everyone else. I agree with that. And [the] Government is in a position where it is saying, *Okay, well, we got an Authority here, let us make sure that everybody is fair and equitable.*

Well, with the inclusion of this Bill, with the Minister's involvement, how is that any different than what is already going on? And so, if the Minister intervenes because it does not agree with the integrated plan, or if it does not agree with the rate, then the question becomes, *Okay then, is this politically driven? Or is this truly in the interest of the people?*

Now, any Government worth its salt is going to say it is in the interest of the people. Well, that is not to say that it does not have a strong political swing to it. But if you have experts involved who are advising the Minister (who is not an expert in this area), [that] these are the best practices, and the Minister has every right to question everything that comes to the table as to the equity in it, the fairness in it, I do not see where we have a problem. So, this is not adding, this Bill is not adding anything to what is already happening other than making this more vulnerable. That is what this is doing. It is making the whole situation more vulnerable.

And I have been on record before, if we have a challenge, I said it before, *Government, listen, just take it over.* If that is the case, just take it over. The business is going to . . . all the business is going to do at the end of the day is make an assessment and say, *Well, we are just going to sell out.* And then we will have another person, another company come in, and then they will just sell out.

We already see it happening in the fuel industry. It is a trend. How many times has ESSO's name changed hands? We still call it ESSO, but it is changing hands all the time. You want to know why? Because we have got too many hands trying to say this is where it needs to go. And so, for sure, the board of directors is at some point in time going to say, *Well, hold on a second, next bidder please.* And then we have got another situation on our hands.

And so, in the interest of this, I appreciate the Minister wants to get to some results. We are not clear exactly on all of what she is targeting, but if it is targeting lower rates, we all know that is almost an impossible task. What we want is a plan going forward on how everyone can afford to pay their bill. And if they cannot, what is the plan on how we fix that? And I believe that the Authority has the ability to put some things in place and give them the power to act on these things, because they have a mandate as well.

And that mandate is in the interest of the people. It is not in the interest of BELCO and its holders. It is in the interest of the people. That is why the Authority is there. It is solely there for the interest of the people. It is not even there for the interest of the Authority, because it can change hands, or whoever is on the commission. The names can change. Its whole purpose is in the interest of the people.

That is no different than the Minister's mandate in the interest of the people.

So let's figure out how we come together. This is not working. It lacks a whole lot of detail on what the intent really is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

None?

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the honourable colleagues, both on the other side and also on this side, for their contributions to today's debate.

Mr. Speaker, I must begin first with the current state. And the current state that we have, which is a piece of legislation that was written and tabled in 2015, tabled in 2016, and formed by a policy in 2015. It would be by the other Administration. It would be difficult at that time to foresee the impact of a piece of legislation should it not go as intended. A number of things have changed since that piece of legislation, so eloquently both tabled and stewarded by the former Administration. But when the TD&R licence holder is no longer a local interested company, a company that is owned by Bermudians, it is a foreign-owned entity, that changes the environment.

When there is an IRP that is confirmed from 2019, and we are in 2026, the question becomes, what can we point to [that] was the success of the process once envisioned and stewarded at that time? Because if we were to look at the fruits of the current IRP process, the question would be, how can we point to the aggressive generation and the 20-month procurement and the wind technologies, when only in 2015 were we actually inviting wind expressions of interest? Which says that the IRP and the process that was so eloquently stewarded and articulated in law, that is being defined as perfectly in nature, did not operate as intended. And so, my intention is to right-size the transition.

As included in my remarks, I spoke to the policy and its intentions. The policy that includes a collaborative electricity sector, that includes collaboration and feedback by all industry stakeholders. And is not at the sole whim and/or being directed by the utility and refined by the Regulatory Authority.

What is also true is that in practice, though stewarded and written in law, the process for which a utility and its interest, and we already know that they have changed because there has been a sale since the Electricity Act and since the IRP. It has changed. And so therefore, the interest has adjusted. And the Regulatory Authority (to the point that was raised) does require greater teeth, and that is a matter before the Ministry. But in addition to that, the people in the meantime must also be considered.

And so as this Administration and successive Administrations have sought to right-size electricity transition,

articulate electricity goals, what is known and also true and stated by all stakeholders who are involved is that there is a disconnect between the interests of the Administration, the Government in its policy, in its mandate given by those who have elected us to serve on their behalf. There is a disconnect between that intention and the promise and the ability to do so as currently enshrined in law.

The powers that are prescribed in the amendment do not create wholesale ministerial discretion. And my remarks today clarified what the provisions of the Act actually seek to do within specific circumstances, prioritising the public interest. Specific circumstances. It is not ministerial directions as entrenched in the current Regulatory Authority Act and Electricity Act, but rather in specific interests and specific circumstances as informed by what is in the sectoral legislation. And in this instance is the Electricity Act.

The IRP and affordability, we have agreed today, we agree that we want lower cost. But as my ministerial brief and successive reports have confirmed, we have not received lower electricity costs. And so, therefore, that indicates to us all that there is a current problem with the current architecture that ought to be right-sized. The fact that we all want low-cost energy, but since it was enacted in 2015, and in 2016 and in 2019 IRPs, we have not seen the fruits of that agreement. We have not seen the fruit of what is intended to be, putting the consumer and their interests first.

Now, there have been things that have changed in the electricity sector, including technology, including things that would have been prescribed in the IRP that no longer are beneficial and have deemed to be viable in Bermuda's context, and that is fine. But what cannot be done is that there is an IRP. There is an investment in technology and studies when we know that the policy has since changed. A 2015 policy is not suited for a 2026 event. We see the impact of the world's oil and fuel volatility that impacts cost. And so, if we are considering a 2015 world that did not foresee and/or consider in both the legislation and in its planning and in its scenarios—yes, done by experts, but even experts do not have the ability to predict the future—it does not consider current state and where we are as a country. And it does not seek to have a level of grounding in the interests that are Bermudian.

We talk about . . . I heard questions raised regarding how the experts who would have crafted the IRP and its intended transition must be given their due expertise. But what happens in practice, and I cannot speak to how the previous Minister did or did not communicate this. But what happens in practice and what should be known is that there will be IRPs presented, of which they have to then be invested and refined because they are so materially different than what the Government and the Administration would have clarified.

So, because I cannot speak to a former Minister and his actions, what I can speak to is what I have done since I have been a Minister. And in May of 2025, I would have issued a Ministerial Directive to the Regulatory Authority under the current architecture of the current law that we think, and I have heard Members share on the other

side, is sufficient. The Ministerial Directive talked about reliability, about rate and tariff redesign. It has talked about consumer protection and the customer, the customer and the Bermudian ultimately being prioritised in future iterations.

Yet still, we have a process that has continued to run that does not consider the ways in which it could do that. There are intended reports and things that would be conducted in the future, but still it is not being considered because the current law does not invite a Ministerial Directive to have an impact on a process that is before the Regulatory Authority.

Members of this House shared about how the IRP was late and all of these things, which would argue and suggest that this is a matter before the Regulatory Authority. And so, therefore, a Ministerial Directive, a policy declaration, a Throne Speech or anything of the like does not have the ability to impact and/or course-correct an existing process that is before the Regulatory Authority. They communicated that to me as well to confirm the same.

And so, ultimately knowing who I serve and who I am elected to serve, it is for the Bermudian people and on behalf of their interests. And so, it would be remiss of me to identify a problem that is not effective. It would be remiss of me to identify a process that, while well-intended and also stewarded appropriately, has not considered the fact that there would be a policy that is not in state, and that did not consider the fact that there would be technological advances and things, and sales of entities. And so, therefore, it is prudent for a government to consider those changes and architect a framework that [the] current Government and future Governments should be able to use through the mandate that they would have been elected through and the people that they have been elected to serve.

The suggestion of job losses and the threat of all of these things, we have already seen them. We can just look at the reports of 2021, 2022, and 2023, and 2024 to say that, again, the well-intended and things that although they may have been thought to be perfect at its time and maybe they were correct for that time, they are eligible to evolve, and the public should always be considered. If it were perfectly written, then we would not see certain things take place. We would not be all in this House agreeing that we should have low-cost of electricity. And I heard Honourable Members say they agree that more could be done. Well, this is the more that we are seeking to do on behalf of the people.

The suggestion of ministerial interference and the questions that would suggest that a Minister's power is now being eligible to steward and/or dictate the IRP process is incorrect. And I do invite the Members to review the legislation that is being proposed today, and it does not invite that at all. The IRP will remain a product of the independent regulator in concert with the TD&R licence holder. But it says that the current direction of travel that considers an old policy, is no longer fit for purpose. It says that that there have been technological advances that we ought to further consider and refine, as informed by the current policy that

the Government has published, to further weigh in or understand the Government's intentions in terms of its next step, the policy is where it ought to live.

And it would not be prudent for, behind closed doors, there to be this tussle between the Regulator and the Government's policy. But rather, this piece of legislation brings it to the fore in true transparency, not where there are instances where there is refinement behind closed doors. But on behalf of the people the refinement takes place in the public domain. And then it becomes the subject of both the Regulator and the TD&R licence holder and all stakeholders to weigh in on how the future of the transition ought to go.

The principle of consumer protection and consumer price and affordability is not a current principle in the section of the Electricity Act for which this amendment is seeking to ensure it is considering. But for us including that principle you have technologies that will have to be paid back, incurring costs that, maybe, if the consumer were prioritised today, the consumer who cannot afford increased costs . . . if the consumer ought to be considered, then the decision to deploy technology that will incur further costs to them would not be made.

The next step that the Ministry seeks to do is to finalise its [National] Electricity Sector Policy and to ensure that the policy reflects the Government's direction. The realignment offers a pragmatic approach to reflect affordability. We know that the provision in the IRP, as guided by section 39, does insert a general duty to ensure affordability in performing the respective functions under the [TD&R] licensee. But it does not have a duty to consider consumer affordability in its integrated resource planning as being presented to this Honourable House.

When asked what the amendment is seeking to achieve, it is to allow for the policy to update an outdated policy . . . the policy to be updated, and for an IRP to consider only an updated policy, which is no longer relevant after 11 years and should have the ability to pivot based on current state, based on what we now know.

Consultation with stakeholders has taken place, and their response during the consultation is that they have no objection to this transition. This transition is part of what is informed by the National Electricity Sector Policy and a policy that will still run as independent by the regulator and informed by the licensee.

What is included in the National Electricity Sector Policy is the fact that the transition of an IRP would be given to the Regulatory Authority that is best suited to both steward and ensure that the costs that are incurred are limited. Each time we allow for the existing process to take place where an IRP could be crafted, invested in, and incur further cost to the ratepayer based on the initial proposal by the licensee and then refinement by the Regulatory Authority, it is not a process that considers the consumer. It is not a process that considers what is in the best interest of Bermuda. And it is not a process that ought to be continued. If it does not work, it ought to be adjusted. And that is what this legislation is seeking to amend and refine.

It is not seeking to offer further interference with the process, but rather, as given the mandate [by] the people who elected us, it is to ensure that the Government's policy and its promises around affordability are considered. And I think future Governments should want that on behalf of the Bermudian interests, not just the current administration.

I believe I have sufficiently answered the questions that were raised in the debate, Mr. Speaker. And so therefore—

The Speaker: You can just move to Committee now.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I now move us into Committee to consider this Electricity [Amendment Act 2026].

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 5:04 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Electricity Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Home Affairs.
Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, [sic] I move that clauses 1 through 8.

An Hon. Member: Madam Chairman.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman . . . sorry, I now move that clauses 1 through 8 be considered.

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

Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
So moved.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides that this Bill be cited as the Electricity Amendment Act 2026.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the Electricity Act 2016 (referred to as the principal Act), by inserting a new definition of the term “integrated resource planning process” or “IRP process.” This term means the process by which an integrated resource plan is requested, submitted, and considered for approval under sections 40 to 44 of the principal Act.

Clause 3 amends section 8(4) of the principal Act to clarify that the existing restrictions of the Minister's power to give Ministerial directions are without prejudice to the

new section. But this ensures that the Minister's special public-interest powers under section 13A are preserved, notwithstanding the general limitations on Ministerial directions in relation to specific matters before the Regulatory Authority, or specific rights or obligations of individual licensees.

Clause 4 inserts a new section 13A into the principal Act. And section 13A provides for the Minister's special powers in the public interest. It empowers the Minister to make an order for the purposes set out in the new Part 8[A], where the Minister is of the opinion that it is in the public interest to do so.

Section 13A also permits the Minister, by such order, to direct the Regulatory Authority to take only such actions that are necessary to give effect to the order. The Regulatory Authority is required to comply with those directions.

And, Madam Chairman, section 13A further provides that a direction given for those purposes shall not constitute a Ministerial direction under the Electricity Act 2016, or as defined in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011. This section applies, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the principal Act of the Regulatory Authority Act 2011.

Clause 5 inserts a new section 39[A] into the principal Act. And section 39A imposes a general duty on the Regulatory Authority on the transmission, distribution and retail licensee in performing their respective functions and obligations under the Act to consider consumer affordability in all integrated resource planning and decision-making processes. It further requires that consumer affordability protections form an integral part of the integrated resource plan.

Clause 6 amends section 44 of the principal Act. Clause 6 provides that in any case to which section 45B applies, following the resumption of the IRP process, the Regulatory Authority may approve the Integrated Resource Plan if it considers that the final draft Integrated Resource Plan is the best approach to meeting the purposes of the Act and complying with the Ministerial directions. In doing so, the Authority must act in accordance with the regulatory principles and any administrative determinations.

Clause 6 also makes consequential amendments to sections 30(4)(a), 49(2A) and 49A(3) of the principal Act by replacing references to section 44(2) with reference to section 44.

Clause 7 inserts Part [8]A into the principal Act. This new Part provides for the suspension and reconstitution of the integrated resource planning process. Section 45A provides for the interpretation and application of the new Part [8]A. It defines key terms, including the IRP suspension order, part of the IRP process, and period of suspension.

Section 45A also clarifies that a reconstitution of the IRP process includes the restarting of the IRP process or any part of that process. The restarting of any part of the IRP process may require the reconsideration of any obligation or deadline and the retaking of any action already taken prior to the period of suspension.

Madam Chairman, section 45A further provides that the Integrated Resource Plan in operation at the time of, or immediately prior to, the making of the IRP suspension order shall continue to be in effect until another integrated resource plan is approved and published in accordance with Part 8, after the expiration of the period of suspension. It provides that Part 8 shall have effect notwithstanding the completion of any part of the IRP process before making of an IRP suspension order.

Section 45B empowers the Minister in accordance with the powers confirmed under section 13A, to make an order to suspend and reconstitute any part of the IRP process. Before making such an order, the Minister may consult the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R licensee. The Minister must also be of the opinion that continuing the IRP process would pose a risk to the reliability, sustainability or affordability of the energy supply, or that suspension and reconstitution is necessary to ensure consistency between government policy and the proposed integrated resource plan. And that continuing the IRP process will be contrary to the public interest.

Madam Chairman, section 45B requires an IRP suspension order to specify the reasons for making the order, the period of suspension, the part or parts of the IRP process that may be reconstituted and any directions necessary for the Authority to give effect to that order. An IRP suspension order is subject to the negative resolution procedure, and section 45C provides for the duration of the suspension, providing that where the IRP process is suspended pursuant to an IRP suspension order, the IRP process shall resume whether or not reconstituted upon the expiry of the period of suspension specified in the order. The period of suspension shall not exceed two years.

Section 45C allows for the Minister to amend the period of suspension by order published in the *Gazette*, providing that the total period of suspension as amended does not exceed two years. An order amending the suspension period is not subject to section 6 of the Statutory [Instruments] Act 1977.

Madam Chairman, section 45D requires the Regulatory Authority to issue a notice before the period of suspension expires. The notice must specify when the IRP process is to resume any part or parts of the IRP process that have been reconstituted, any steps to be taken in relation to the resumption of the IRP process, and any guidance relating to that resumption.

Section 45D further provides that notice shall be sent to the TD&R licensee by registered mail or registered electronic mail and published on the official website of the Authority. A notice or guidance issued under this section is not a statutory instrument within the meaning of the Statutory Instruments Act 1977.

Section 45E provides that where the IRP process is reconstituted, the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R licensee shall act in accordance with any Ministerial declaration issued during the period of suspension.

Madam Chairman, section 45F provides for an appeal to the Supreme Court. The TD&R licensee or any other

person aggrieved by making of an IRP suspension order may appeal the order to the Supreme Court on a point of law or mixed law and fact.

Section 45F requires such an appeal to be brought within 21 days after making the order or within such shorter or longer period as the Supreme Court may allow. Unless the Supreme Court otherwise orders, an appeal shall not suspend the operation of the IRP suspension order pending determination of the appeal.

Clause 8 amends the Regulatory Authority Act 2011. Clause 8 amends the subheading under Part 2 of the Act by inserting a reference to "POWERS" so that the heading refers to both "FUNCTIONS" "AND POWERS."

Clause 8 also inserts new section 4A into the Regulatory Authority Act, 2011. Section 4A provides that a Minister shall have such powers in the public interest in respect of a regulated industry sector for which he is responsible, as are specified in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 and in sectoral legislation.

Madam Chairman, this amendment supports the new public interest framework introduced by the Bill and ensures that ministerial powers of this nature are recognised in both the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 and in relevant sector-specific legislation, including the Electricity Act 2016.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8, inclusively?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22, I believe it is.

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is, indeed. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

My question to the Honourable Minister is at page 2 of the Bill in relation to clause 4, which contemplates inserting a new section 13A into the primary Act, namely, the Electricity Act 2016.

The newly inserted section can be seen there at clause 4, and it is going to be [section] 13A. And what it does is it gives powers to the Minister to make orders for the purposes set out in Part 8A, which follows later in the Bill. So, there is a power to make what I am going to call "a Part 8A order."

Further down under subclause (3), it says "A direction given for the purposes of subsection (2)," (so what I am calling the Part 8A order) "shall not constitute a 'Ministerial direction'" (in quotes) "under this Act ('this Act' is the primary Act) "as defined in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011." And that is a reference to Ministerial directions in section 8 of the primary Act.

My question for the Honourable Minister and her team that is here today is: How is a Part 8[A] order different than a section 8 Ministerial direction? How are those two things different in her view?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8, inclusively?

Okay, I recognise the Minister. Minister, no one else has a question at this point in time.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sure, yes. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

And I will refer him to the Regulatory Authority Act, which I did speak to in the Statement, and also earlier. but I will reiterate. The current powers under section 8, and under the Regulatory Authority Act, speak to the fact that a Ministerial declaration published may not be given for something that is before the Authority. And so, it speaks to this in section . . . and the existing section . . . I am sure I got the right one . . . sorry, I just want to make sure I am pulling it up. Unfortunately, yes.

So, in the current, go ahead —

The Chairman: No, no, no, no.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I was just going to say, I think it is section 8 that the Minister might be looking for in the primary Act.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, but I do not have that.

Yes, it is section 8 under the primary Act. It does speak to the fact that the . . . there isn't a matter . . . it cannot be something that is the subject of a matter that is currently before the Regulatory Authority. And so, as such, an IRP and a process that is currently before the Authority and being considered would not have the ability to be impacted or governed by a Ministerial Directive that is issued at that time.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.
Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

So, to try to put that in plain English, Minister, would you agree with me that the restrictions in section 8 of the primary Act regarding what you may or may not do in relation to the Regulatory Authority are being bypassed or circumvented in a Part 8A order pursuant to clause 4? Is that . . . effectively the prior restrictions are no longer going to restrain you. Yes?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Only in relation to an IRP. That is the only instance where this, as you quote, section 8, for the purposes of this amendment, would apply.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.
Member, you have the floor

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And thanks to the Honourable Minister.

My next question is on page three of the Bill under clause 7.

Clause 7 is inserting a new section [after section] 45 of the principal Act, being the Electricity Act 2016. And below clause 7, the new Part 8A (that we were just talking about) is set out.

And my question relates to the powers being granted to the Minister under the new 45A, to be inserted, and more specifically, the powers that are under 45A, subsection (2), in the middle of the page, where it reads

“For the purposes of this Part—

“(a) a reconstitution of the IRP process includes the restarting of the IRP process or any part of the IRP process.”

And so, my questions in relation to [45A](2)(a) read together with [45A](2)(b), which states “the restarting of any part of the process may require the reconsideration of any obligation or deadline and the retaking of any action already taken under the IRP process prior to the period of suspension; . . .”

My questions . . . I have four questions to the Minister, and I will put them all at once with your leave, Madam.

One is, effectively, the amending Act is going to grant you a power to pause for two years, and a power to effectively retake any action already taken. So that is my first question. Those are the two powers you are being given.

And my second, my third and fourth questions are in relation to each of those powers, the power to pause and the power to (in my language) negate a prior decision or retake the decision in relation to each of those powers. How does the Honourable Minister anticipate utilising those two powers?

So those are four separate questions.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

There being no other questions, I call on the Minister to provide answers to the four questions.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do not know that I captured four, Madam [Chairman], but I did capture—

The Chairman: I can ask that the Member repeat the questions for you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I think the technical team would be thankful, if you don't mind.

The Chairman: Could you repeat the questions, maybe a little slower?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sure. Yes. I will go one at a time.

The Chairman: Yes, okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Does the Minister agree with me that 2(a) and 2(b) provide the Minister with a power to pause the IRP?

The Chairman: Okay, that is one question.
Go ahead. You can answer that question for us.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay, the next question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Does the Minister also agree with me that 2(a) and 2(b) read together give the power to the Minister to negate a prior decision under the IRP?

The Chairman: Okay, that is the second question.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: A prior decision. Yes. Under a proposed IRP, not an existing IRP.

The Chairman: Okay, would you like to put . . . did you get the question?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Some clarification.

The Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: It is related to the process, not to an IRP that is currently an existing document that has effect. This is speaking to an IRP process. And so, yes, it does allow to pause and restart and considerations that were taken relating to an IRP and its process specifically.

The Chairman: Question three.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, actually that throws up a subsidiary question—

The Chairman: A question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, so I better just clarify.
I believe the Minister in drawing a distinction between IRP and IRP process in making reference to the definition in clause 2 on page one of the Bill, “integrated resource planning process” or “IRP process” and what it means there. Can I just confirm that that is what the Minister has in mind?

The Chairman: Before you put question three? Is that what you are saying, yes?
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, that is correct.

The Chairman: Thank you. Did you want—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you for that clarification, Honourable Minister.

So, moving on to the third of the four questions, then, how does the Minister anticipate using the power to pause the IRP or IRP process?

The Chairman: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: What is known is that the [National] Electricity Sector Policy of 2015, which is currently the approved Government policy, has aggressive 85 per cent renewable targets for energy transition in Bermuda.

What we know is that it also forecasted a 2035 target. And we are just short of 2035 with not having made material progress towards that 85 per cent target.

To proceed with a target, with such an aggressive transition, means that the cost relating to reviews, research, [and] technological viability studies will be done under a confined timeline which will all be compounded and at the cost of the ratepayer. That is a fact.

And so, due to that, accepting where we are in our transition, the energy policy that is being proposed seeks to right-size a transition that is more gradual in our context; that does not compromise our energy targets, but rather says, due to where we know that we are now, despite the intentions of previous policies and intentions of previous IRPs and its targets, these targets ought to be reconsidered.

And our transition in support of what only makes sense and is viable, based on the cost of living that each one of us and our constituents complain about in Bermuda and its context, is considering that as a priority on behalf of the consumer. So that is just one of the ways and one of the targets that ought to be reconsidered as currently proposed in the National Electricity Sector Policy.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thanks to the Honourable Minister.

Just trying to put that into plain English. My understanding of the answer just given by the Honourable Minister is that she anticipates using this power either to adjust the target or to delay the target or potentially both. Have I correctly understood the Minister's answer?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, we will be guided by the technical input. But the policy seeks to right-size the energy transition and an IRP process as currently enshrined in the law. And the [principal] Act speaks to the fact that it ought to be considered in any IRP process planning.

The Chairman: Your question—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I think I am done.

But just in terms of the uses of the word “right-size,” does that mean either adjustment or delay? Or does it mean something else?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Right-size is appropriate, as articulated in the example, to force an aggressive target in an environment where we hear every single day that the persons in the public cannot afford it. Who will be paying for the technology and its deployment, and the surveys, the consultants, under a confined and rushed time period?

To me, that is not prudent and is not appropriate, considering the strain that we already have on cost to the ratepayer and the price that we already agreed in this Honourable House is too high. And so, this process that is being considered right-size means to consider appropriately the current state that right now is not in contemplation.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

There being no other person, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move that the preamble be approved. Oh no, I move that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There seems to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 8 passed.]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: You want the preamble?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Oh, no, I mean that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam [Chairman], I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So approved

[Motion carried: The Electricity Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Gavel]

House resumed at 5:27 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 being reported at the House as printed?

An Hon. Member: Nay.

Another Hon. Member: Nay.

An Hon. Member: Nay.

The Speaker: So, there are some objections, but I do not think there is sufficient to stop it from being reported right now. But I think we should record that there were objections. Thank you.

So that matter has been brought to the House

The next item on the Order Paper, [Order] No. 7, that is being carried [forward]. [Order] No. 8, Motion to be moved by the Honourable Minister Adams, notice of which was given on 29 May 2026.

Minister, are you going to move . . . are you moving your motion now, Minister?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes Mr. Speaker.

MOTION

COMPASS POINT BUILDING APPROVAL TO PURCHASE

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now take under consideration the following Motion, notice of which was given on 29 May 2026. It is:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in accordance with section 2(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1970, this Honourable House approved the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

None.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: All right.

Mr. Speaker there are moments in Government when the easiest decision is to do nothing. To continue operating in the same way. To continue paying the same costs year after year, and to accept existing limitations simply because that is how things have always been done.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are also moments when doing nothing has a cost. And that is the fundamental question before this Honourable House today.

This debate is not simply about the acquisition of the Compass Point Building. It is about whether Government is prepared to take a responsible step towards reducing its reliance on private rental accommodation, modernising the government estate, and creating greater financial capacity to invest in the priorities that matter most to Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, today Government spends approximately \$11 million annually on commercial office accommodation. These facilities are necessary for the delivery of public services, and leasing will continue to have an appropriate role within the government estate.

However, this proposal represents a deliberate first step towards reducing that burden. By relocating departments that are currently operating from privately leased facilities into a government-owned building, Government projects a reduction of approximately \$2 million annually in private rental expenditure. That is \$2 million every year that can be redirected over time toward roads, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection, and the services that Bermudians rely upon.

Mr. Speaker, before committing to an investment of this magnitude, a responsible government must undertake a thorough analysis of the available options and determine which approach delivers the greatest long-term value for the people of Bermuda.

The Ministry of Public Works and Environment therefore considered several options, or several approaches.

The first was the construction of a new purpose-built government facility. While a new facility could be designed specifically to meet Government's long-term needs, the reality of Bermuda's current construction environment means that this would represent the most expensive and time-consuming option. Recent industry estimates indicate that new construction can cost between approximately \$700 and \$1,000 per square foot. A comparable 81,000 square foot facility could therefore require construction costs between \$56 and \$81 million before considering land acquisition, professional fees, planning approvals, procurement and other associated costs.

In addition to the significant capital investment required, Government would continue spending approximately \$11 million annually on commercial accommodation during the many years required to design, approve, procure, and construct such a facility.

The second option was to repurpose existing government properties, including former school buildings. However, many of these properties have already been strategically allocated to important national priorities, including community services, facilities for seniors, food security initiatives, and education reform. Furthermore, converting these facilities into modern office accommodation would itself require substantial capital investment, extensive

refurbishment works and considerable time before they could be brought into service.

The third option was the acquisition of an existing structurally sound and fit-for-purpose building. After considering these options, Government determined that the acquisition of Compass Point represented the most prudent and cost-effective path forward.

The Government negotiated a purchase price of \$14.5 million, which was \$1.5 million below the valuation conducted by the Department of Land Valuation. The acquisition cost is approximately \$178 per square foot. And even after accounting for refurbishment, technology upgrades, internal fit-out, and other investments required to create a modern government facility, the total investment remains approximately \$275 per square foot.

Mr. Speaker, when compared with the cost and time required to construct a new facility or convert other government properties, it is clear why the acquisition of Compass Point represents the most practical, timely, and financially responsible option available to the Government.

Mr. Speaker, this acquisition also supports a more coordinated and efficient government. By bringing together departments with closely connected responsibilities in finance, economic development regulation, and administration, government can improve collaboration, reduce duplication, streamline processes and create a more seamless experience for the public. For the individual Bermudian or business owner, this means less time navigating multiple government locations, improved coordination between departments, and a government that is better structured to respond to their needs. That is why modernising the government estate is not simply about buildings. It is about creating a public service that is better equipped to serve the people of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the most important benefits of this acquisition is one that may not be immediately obvious to the public.

For many years Government has faced a significant challenge in modernising its existing estate. The issue has not simply been identifying buildings that require refurbishment. The issue has been finding suitable accommodation where departments can be temporarily relocated while those works are carried out. The reality is simple: you cannot effectively undertake major refurbishment works while an entire government department remains fully operational within the same building. And the purchase of Compass Point changes that.

It provides the swing space necessary to temporarily decant departments from ageing facilities allowing government to undertake comprehensive upgrades in a safer more efficient and more cost-effective manner. Once completed, departments can return to those facilities that are better designed for modern technology, accessibility, collaboration, and improved public service.

In that sense Compass Point is not the end of the government estate strategy. It is the enabling step that allows the strategy to move forward. It unlocks Government's ability to transform ageing facilities, improve the working

environment of our public officers and provide the public with government facilities that are fit for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that some Bermudians will ask whether these resources should instead be directed towards roads and housing and addressing the cost of living. However, responsible leadership requires us to do two things at once—or multiple things at once.

We must continue addressing the needs of Bermudians today while also making strategic investments that strengthen Government's ability to address those challenges tomorrow. By reducing private rental expenditure, managing public assets strategically, and improving the efficiency of government operations, we create greater financial flexibility for future investments in the priorities that matter most to our people.

Mr. Speaker, no single decision will solve every challenge facing Bermuda. However, it is a practical decision that places Government in a stronger position to address those challenges over the long term.

The easiest decision before this Honourable House is to preserve the status quo, to continue paying the same costs, occupying the same buildings, and accepting the same limitations simply because that is how things have always been done. But the responsibility of leadership is not simply to maintain what we inherited. The responsibility of leadership is to make the decisions necessary to build what comes next.

This Government believes that Compass Point represents such a decision. Not because it is the easiest decision, but because it is the more responsible one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister,

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

MP King—

Mr. Robert King: Go ahead, Vance. I will go after you.

The Speaker: MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your presentation

Mr. Speaker, the concept that Government should own the properties that it occupies versus renting makes sense. It makes sense in the short-term, and it makes sense in the long-term. From a long-term perspective, the money spent on renting usually is far greater than the cost to maintain a building.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, during my time as the general manager of the Bermuda Housing Corporation, I did recommend that the Corporation buy a facility so that it will cease paying rent itself and also garner rental income from the floors not being used directly. It did not happen while I was there, but it did happen a few years later. So, it makes sense.

I do have some questions for the Minister that should be easy for him to answer.

We do take the Minister at his word that the sales price or the agreed price, sorry, is \$1.5 million below the valuation. I do agree with the Minister that there are other uses that could be made of these funds. But you can say that at every moment in time in a government's day-to-day operations there are competing . . . there are competing interests for the funds that are available.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: But this opportunity to purchase a building does not come along every day.

I deduce from the Minister's comments either today or last week, I believe he made a statement as well two weeks ago, that a structural survey was done. And again, we trust . . . not having had sight of that, we trust that—and well, we do have some questions. Were there any deficiencies in the structure that will require remediation before the Government can utilise the structure? Has it sat empty, Minister, for any length of time? I only ask because we know, particularly from a plumbing perspective, a building can deteriorate quicker not being used than and when it is used. And this may have come out in this . . . a report by a structural engineer.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister, Where do we sit or do we have any government leases that have expired on rented properties or are about to expire making those particular departments that are renting those spaces prime candidates for the first move? Or is there an overall plan, coordinated plan that ties in the synergies of departments that work together?

So also questions that I would have are, When does the Minister anticipate the building will be complete . . . I mean, the purchase will be complete, and the building will be ready for occupancy? And as it relates to using the building to move departments, to renovate their existing accommodations, has consideration been given to only moving that department once as opposed to moving them, causing disruption (not only to the employees but the service to the public), and then moving them again back to their old common accommodations? Has any consideration been given to moving them once, and basically that is your permanent home, and someone else moves into, or another government department moves into the space that you vacated?

In the structural engineers' report (I assume one was done) in addition to identifying any areas for remediation in that report, has Government been able to garner information about the remaining useful life of the Compass Point Building?

So again, Mr. Speaker, this is a large purchase, but it is one that makes financial sense and we support.

Thank you

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King.

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

Just a couple of observations. In terms of the Compass Point Building, it was on the market April 2024, and I know that we had the recent Budget Debate, and there was no mention of an intention to purchase this building. And the concern that I think we all would have is the monies being allocated or utilised for the purchase of this, where is that going to come from?

An Hon. Member: Supplement.

Mr. Robert King: The other—supplement, okay.

An Hon. Member: Sure.

Mr. Robert King: And understanding that this is all part of good governance, making sure that we have buildings fit for purpose, it does not seem as though, barring what my colleague here was saying, is that there was proper foresight and planning to ensure that we would not have to ask for a supplemental but that it would be part of the regular budgetary allocations for capital acquisitions that would be expected, understanding the state of disrepair of many of the government buildings that are currently out there.

So, I take a slightly different tack from my colleague here. Ordinarily, owning your own building is good. [It] is a good thing because you would think that, you know, you are not giving rent to somebody else, you are able to invest in your own properties. But what we have seen is that the current administration does not maintain its own infrastructure. So, there is a fear that we have a brand-new building, and if we are to rely upon what history has told us, it is only a matter of time before Compass Point ends up like many of these derelict and abandoned buildings around town.

So, there is a concern that this can be an opportunity for the building to be used responsibly, maintained, and repaired as required.

The other question that I have is understanding that the Department of Child and Family Services is currently paying approximately \$919,000 a year in rent for 131 Front Street. The Deputy Premier can declare his interest. And also, HM Customs currently pays \$447,000 per year. Is it expected that these two departments will be moving into the new building? And what other departments will be moving into this building, understanding that the rents currently being paid are north of \$11 million? We want to make sure that we are getting good value for the purchase of this building.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, just a few questions on this.

I fully concur and agree that a long-term plan is the right way to go as far as I have always felt that we needed

to move the offices in a centralised area. The unintended consequence of that is people having to go back and forth from one building to another parish just to get forms printed, creating challenges. And many of the people who are having to get some of the assistance that is needed can ill afford to have to be travelling all over the place, trying to get a copy of this and a copy of that. And they got to go all over the land even down as far as Southside to get things done. So, I am in favour of the purchase of the building.

I do have some questions as far as timing. I mean, we are in a building right now that we could have got for a steal, and we are still paying rent. But we should have bought it. It has been here, we have been here for a long time. We could have certainly reduced our rents with the price that we could have purchased this building up for. And I talk with some knowledge of what was going on, and having several chats with the former owner, the Honourable Member that graced our Chambers as well.

So the timing. I am . . . okay, why didn't we? So, now we are going to buy a building. So, what is the exception of that? We have, and I get the fact that cost is high, but if you are waiting for cost to go down, you probably will not be a Member of Parliament by that time. So, the cost is always going to go up, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, you know, now is the time. We have got . . . I call it the Brazilian Pepper Museum of the old prison office there.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mexican Pepper, Brazilians, and all of that. I mean, that was what—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, you know, that has been like what, eight years—maybe more. We had opportunity. We can build on these things. So, we have got the property, but all of a sudden, now we are going to jump in and purchase this massive building, which is, as I said, I agree we should be doing this. But we have got other opportunities.

If Government is not going to lead in building on its own infrastructure or even buy the buildings that it is already renting in like what we are here in now, why would the private sector say, *Well, you know . . .* But the private sector is building . . . at the cost of construction and per square foot now.

So, to me it does not . . . it is not adding up to say that, *Well, with the cost of the construction today, we are just going to wait it out.* Well, good luck with that. Because eight years ago, we could have built a building, and it was much less.

So, you know, is there a plan to move? What departments are we looking at—or maybe we have not gotten to that point, but certainly there is a plan in place that Public

Works has. It has been working on plans for some time now. There have been other opportunities to buy other buildings. I do not know maybe it is because of the CIT that we are now saying, *Well, yes, you know we can go ahead and buy a building*. Maybe that is the case. I do not know.

Let us hear from the Minister. Let him substantiate why this building, as opposed to the building that we are in right now—great opportunity to buy from a local, home-grown guy . . . his property. I do not know who owns it now, but well . . . I should not say that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: They certainly do not look like me.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: When we had an opportunity to buy the building. So . . . I am just saying, we should have bought the building. No, no objections at all to it.

With this building now, I understand with renovations, are we going to be making this state-of-the-art when it comes to technology? That is going to cost money to do that. So, I know that the Minister is saying that they weighed out the cost of building as opposed to renovating, but I do not know if we are planning on putting any fancy stuff in there or not. And are we planning on occupying the whole building in and of itself? Maybe we are looking to rent some of that part. I have not heard that from the Minister as well.

I am glad to hear that he, they negotiated for it. I believe he said at least a million less than—

Hon. Jache Adams: [It's] \$1.5 [million].

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, \$1.5 [million] less.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just curious though, was there any other bids that were on the table for less than this that were out there that were being entertained before Government came along?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I do not know. You would know. We all know this. I am—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You know, if I am asking you a question, I must know a little something that is going on.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I thought you would have presumed that when I get up and ask a question.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I mean it is fine to say that you are getting [it] for less than the surveyed price. But I think that probably [there] were some agreements that were in play already for less. Who knows? Maybe you should check it out. You might be able to get a better price, Minister. It ain't too late. We are still discussing it in motion to adjourn *[sic]*. Well . . . on this motion.

Check it out, please, Minister. Maybe you can come back with a better figure. It would be wonderful to see that.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And I would also like to know, with this purchase . . . obviously, are we also looking at any other properties at this time? Because I do not know, I mean, I recognise that we have got about what a little over a thousand civil servants who are eligible for retirement, so are we going to . . . I don't know, if they are going to be able to replace them now. You are having a jobs forum coming up where we know it is difficult to fill these, a lot of these jobs.

And I do not know as of today where that figure will be, as far as the total number of civil servants who fall under Government. But it would be interesting to hear about what the plan is in the future of how many people will this building house, if you have thought that out? Obviously, you are thinking about the number of people, displacing them, where they are likely to come from, and what ministries. So that will be important as well.

And at what . . . is there an estimated date? Since it sounds as if a lot of work has been done, at what point are we looking at occupying the actual building itself and seeing the benefit of having our own people within the building in and of itself.

Again, we are supportive of this purchase. But it certainly does not come without questions on the broader scale of where you want to take this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Just a very, very quick question for the Minister, and I do apologise, I should know the answer to this.

There was a time when we tabled things. We actually tabled them, and I could have walked up to the table and taken a look. I have taken a quick look at your Ministerial Statement of 29 May [2026].

But my question is simply this: I know that the property is the big building there. I know just up the hill on Gorham Road behind, or to the west (if it is west) is the car park as well. And I believe that both were for sale and I was

just curious if the Government has bought the car park as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: [Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Everybody on this side is in support, so

[Laughter]

The Speaker: So, are you speaking for this side?

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I would not want to spoil it up. I think it is . . . Mr. Speaker, good afternoon and good afternoon to the public

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago I had spoken to the then Minister of Works and just asked a question as to what we are paying in rents. He told me the number. And then I looked at who owned all the buildings.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I was like, *hmmm*.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: *Hmmm*. I do not know exactly, you know, maybe somebody in here owns a building or two, I do not know. But the point—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The point being, Mr. Speaker, is that as a Labour Party, who are now Government . . .

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: It was before that, but anyway.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: As a Labour Party paying rents . . . as a Labour Party in Government paying rents to folks that do not support you, I think it fundamentally does not make sense.

But be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I think I can safely say the government, the Progressive Labour Party Government is turning the corner when it comes to owning buildings and building houses. I am tying the two in because we do not want . . . just as we do not want the Government to be paying unnecessary rent, we do not want our people out in public to be paying unnecessary rent—you have got to pay. It is just a matter of what you are going to

pay and if, at the end of the day, you are going to have some equity. If at the end of the day, you are going to have the ability to buy something for yourself.

So, I fully support the Minister. And as we transition out of other people's buildings, if we still have other people left, we need to look at either building our own, or buying another one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly, thank you to honourable colleagues for their contribution and what appears to be strong support for said acquisition.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: For the record. For the record strong support is what . . . I said strong support, huh? Can we get that? Okay, strong support.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: So, let us just tackle a few questions that were asked.

It will sort of be a bit random, but to MP Pearman's question about the car park. Yes, and the . . . so the car park was included and certainly a part of the purchase price.

MP Campbell did ask, sort of, What deficiencies are in the building? Most notably, there are some roof leaks that were identified. But those . . . and the need, sorry, and the need to repair or replace said roof was factored into the purchase price. So, it was known.

Do we have any government, sorry, so what is . . . or, When is the purchase going to be complete and the completion of the moves? So, the purchase is aimed for the end of July 2026, subject to approval . . . to complete the transaction and the initial occupancy is expected at December of 2026. There is expected [to be] a few months to do some, as I mentioned, some technology upgrades, some internal fit-outs, and the like, but certainly expected to be . . . or the initial occupancy is scheduled for, just as I said, December of 2026.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Pardon?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: No comment there. No comment there.

Do we have any government leases that have expired, leases which are moving in? So yes, we do, and they

are considered in the overall plan. It includes the synergistic move to have the site as a financial hub. So as an example, financial-related departments . . . it is designed to have them all under the same roof, in the same particular department.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: So what departments, sorry, . . . do we have any . . . sorry. In the structural engineer's report, did the report indicate the remaining useful life? The building has been well-maintained and is in excellent shape. With the proper maintenance, it is expected to last at least an additional 50 years.

I think it was MP King who spoke about, you know, the upkeep of this particular building. I think it is important to understand and note that we have a significant capital budget, and so you will note that we have already begun the process of investing in what will be deemed underutilised buildings. You could look at St David's, which used to be the St David's Post Office, that is now the St David's or the East End Coast Guard Station. You could look at the work that we are doing up in Somerset for the Mangrove Bay Clinic. These are examples of us now being in a position to invest in our capital assets.

And so, with the transition of departments moving in and . . . sorry, with the acquisition providing the swing space for us to now decant, it gives us the ability now with the capital funding that we have to invest in . . . to leave . . . the assets. It now, with the capital budget that we have, we are now in a space where we can make material Investments in not only upkeeping our current stock but also investing in these new properties as well.

Is the Government looking at any other properties? The Ministry is always looking for good prospects that provide value for money for the Government. You will know that we get proposals, whether it is properties, or whatever it is, there is always opportunities that are put before this Government. And we do our appropriate analysis and thus make a decision. And so, we did the same approach with this particular opportunity. It was deemed to be the right time for us and the right conditions for us to make said acquisition. And we are looking to move forward with it. So absolutely, there is an opportunity for us—sorry, we get opportunities all the time. We will do those assessments. So it would be, you know, incorrect for us to say that the buck stops here. You know, we will continue to look at opportunities and when there are ones or those that provide good value for the people then we will look to analyse it further and perhaps execute.

And I think I am at the end, Mr Speaker. And so, with that I move that the motion be approved.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Are you trying to get your Minister's attention?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I will . . . I continue—

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: I will continue to move that the motion be approved, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Hon. Jache Adams: I got you.

The Speaker: Get that one finished.

Hon. Jache Adams: You and I can always have a separate conversation. But we are on board together.

The Speaker: Okay. Good.

An Hon. Member: We are on board.

The Speaker: Okay. The Minister has moved the motion and there has been no objections to the motion. Just drawing that note for the record. There is no objection to the motion.

There is some conversation, but no objections.
Thank you.

[Motion carried: The House approved the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke.]

The Speaker: That now brings us to a close of the Orders for today.

We would like to do our third readings now.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to [move the] Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Okay, the Bill has been read the third time by its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
There are none. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the said Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and now passed.

[Motion carried: The Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: The next would be the Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

An Hon. Member: Objections.

Another Hon. Member: Objections.

The Speaker: Objections are noted.

BILL

THIRD READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Electricity Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 26 June [2026] at 10:00 am.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, far beyond me to get in between—

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Mr. Famous, I thought you spoke briefly just earlier, so we can get out early.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I am saying something in brief, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay then, that's fine.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Far beyond me to get in between people and their partying.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: You have your two minutes, sir.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

BACKBENCHERS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Mr. Christopher Famous: My entire elected political life. I have served as a Backbencher—

The Speaker: Aha.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —and part of the role as a Backbencher is to be supportive of Ministers even when they are veering too right or too left, you be supportive and you help reign them back in.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, we were invited, cajoled, forced . . . to a meeting down in St. David's. Southside, St. David's to be precise. And we faced the people of St. David's when we were talking about bringing a project down there. And it was a learning lesson for all of us there because the people of St. David's expressed historical angst on situations.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I want to give kudos to the Minister who was at the bat, taking some hard balls coming to him, and kept his composure, and helped to inform the people. Now there might have to be some little bit of compromise going on, here and there. But the point I am getting at, Mr. Speaker, is when you have an issue as important as housing, there are going to be sensitivities all around. And no matter whether it is us as the Government, or the OBA as Government, you have to deal with people face on, because that's when they . . . once they come at you, and you stand your ground, and you work with them, they respect you even more,

Likewise, another Minister I support, Minister Alexa Lightbourne. I listened to a radio clip where she faced the fire of some unknown persons calling into a radio show, people writing all sorts of innuendos on social media, and she has stood her ground with grace and informed the people.

So, I say to anyone who is a Backbencher now, or Backbencher in the future, right, part—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I have got your spot for you right here!

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Keep talking this way.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, whoever is a Backbencher, right, the majority of parliamentarians are not going to be in Cabinet. But the point is that it is about supporting your Ministers and helping to guide them when they need their guidance.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everybody a happy [National] Heroes Day, and a happy Carnival, and as MP Jarion [Richardson] would say, let us do this responsibly so people do not get the calls that they should not get.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy Sabbath, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sure. Thank you for keeping it short. Minister Furbert, are you rising for a brief moment?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

The Speaker: You have the floor.

AUTISM: CHALLENGES FACING FAMILIES AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, while we are anticipating celebrating [National] Heroes weekend, I just want to first start by saying Happy [National] Heroes weekend. And I wish everyone a safe holiday.

Mr. Speaker. I do want to take the opportunity to address three topics.

Last weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with parents who have children who are on the autism spectrum. And they invited me to their monthly "Chat and Chew" that they have and it was an opportunity to hear the challenges that they experience with their journey raising a child who has autism challenges, from access to assessments, challenges to access to getting timely reports. Challenges to even having access to those assessments and professionals locally. Challenges with having access to speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. Challenges with the support professionals within the school system. And so, we discussed and they shared those challenges with us. But I just want to take the opportunity to just share from where we were to where we are today.

Our public school systems at one point, Mr. Speaker, did not have specialised autism programmes. We did not have them at all. And so, we now have a number of them from preschool all the way up to senior school now, and that is something we did not have before.

I also want to take the opportunity to praise and thank Tomorrow's Voices that provides a significant amount of support to that population and to the parents as well. And so that is another programme that has significantly developed over the number of years as well, providing support and services to children and adults with ASD.

I would also like to acknowledge the team of the Office of Youth Affairs as well. And they have expanded their services with their after-school programming to support children that have ASD. And I just want to congratulate them for training the staff. The staff does yearly training to make sure that they are as equipped as they can be with providing support to children and parents, so that we can include children who are on the autism spectrum. Because it is not an easy task. It is not for the faint of people particularly when dealing with behavioural concerns that can sometimes be associated with ASD. And so, I do want to acknowledge the Office of Youth Affairs for embracing this vision. And we look forward to our programming and support for the parents of children with ASD as we go into the

summer, because we will be providing summer programming.

DEPUTY GOVERNORS AND PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Moving on, Mr. Speaker, this . . . was it . . . Thursday. Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the [Overseas Territories] Deputy Governors [and Heads of Public Service Summit]. Yes. And where we had representatives from the different Caribbean countries, Deputy Governors from the different Caribbean countries, where they had the opportunity to speak to the challenges that they were having themselves within the civil service.

But what was interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, is which . . . you know, Bermuda has a Governor and Bermuda has a Deputy Governor and there is very rarely an opportunity where you get to see—and please do not take this comment the wrong way, but it was good to see the representation of Black people as Deputy Governors in the . . . serving as Deputy Governors for the other Caribbean Overseas Territories.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, yes.

And it was good to learn about the similarities and issues that we commonly share as small island jurisdictions and how they work alongside each other in dealing with the issues of recruitment and sustaining public servants in the civil service. So, it was a good opportunity to see the inter-relationships between the Caribbean countries.

CARICOM: FULL MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS FOR BERMUDA

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I want to also just speak to a bit of . . . CARICOM. And just like MP Famous mentioned, there was a short segment of a radio talk show in which Minister Alexa [Lightbourne] was speaking about CARICOM. And it was just very interesting the comments that were coming into the radio station. And a lot of those comments were around what are CARICOM's benefits to Bermuda.

And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to speak to the value of Bermuda and Bermuda's contributions to CARICOM. Because Bermuda has value and Bermuda can make contributions. We have, a lot of the times, the Caribbean countries or the Overseas Territories visiting Bermuda because Bermuda has demonstrated development in the area of international business or financial sector. Bermuda has demonstrated development of a water system or a waste management system that these other countries want to see. Bermuda has development, particularly with the water system, the structure of our roofs, Mr. Speaker, and how we collect our water which a lot of countries would die to have, you know, how we were able to

construct our roofs so that we could collect water, so that we do not have to worry about water if we have sufficient rainfall.

Mr. Speaker, with the development now that we have heard yesterday, or this week, with the development of the subsea cables, we are setting direction. We are also setting direction in the development of digital assets and digital financing. Mr. Speaker.

So, while we want to talk about everything that might not be so good, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to CARICOM, Bermuda indeed has value, and its people have value to be able to contribute to the whole CARICOM picture.

Taking us back to when I had brought information to this House in regard to the United Nations Development Fund and our relationship with UNDP [United Nations Development Programme]. It was not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, to get Bermuda recognised to be a part of that programme. And partly because of how they looked at Bermuda's GDP and Bermuda's value financially.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: There were also many programmes, Mr. Speaker, that Bermuda could not partake in because we were not full membership. I remember attending a SIDS [Small Island Developing States] conference and going to different side events and they would share in these side events, Mr. Speaker, the grants that were available to countries that had full membership of CARICOM. And because Bermuda was an associate member, we did not have access to these grants. And I thought, wow, if our people could have access to these grants—so that they can get training in the area of tourism, or they can get training in the area of creative arts, and many other grants that were available—those would be awesome benefits that could be available to our people.

But the conversation, it is not . . . it has turned into one of, in my opinion, racist comments and comments about crime when our Caribbean nation's brothers and sisters . . . we are more than the topic of racism, Mr. Speaker. We are more than the topic of crime, Mr. Speaker. We . . . we, Mr. Speaker, have contributed much to the development of our people within the Caribbean countries. And so, while I would like to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that CARICOM will follow a process, a track, the Minister has come out, time after time after time again in regard to the introduction of the Green Paper, which we have already said. And then we will introduce a White Paper, Mr. Speaker.

There are many steps and processes in—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr Speaker, this is disrespectful.

The ones that write, they write articles all the time about the benefits of CARICOM.

Mr. Speaker, there are many steps and processes, and we must respect the process, Mr. Speaker. We must respect the process. And so, I want to applaud Minister Alexa [Lightbourne] and her team—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert:—for the work in which they are doing, and they will continue to do, to share and to answer questions, to share the relevance and benefits of CARICOM. Because, Mr Speaker, it is not everything bad. Bermuda deserves the opportunity to be recognised for the good work, and the good deeds that it does, and Bermuda has value.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to share the contributions that we, as a country, can share as we go along this journey of seeking more information about becoming full members of CARICOM.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other—MP DeCouto, you have the floor.

HOLIDAY WEEKEND AND WARWICK WORKMAN'S CLUB FAMILY FUN DAY

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

First of all, obviously, I wish everybody in Bermuda a happy holiday weekend, a safe holiday weekend

Number two, Saturday the 20th, we will be hosting a Family Fun Day in Warwick from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Warrick Workman's Club. So, I am just trying to get the word out.

An Hon. Member: Come on, PLP.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Number three, Mr. Speaker and this topic is not very fun.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Free food, yes, that is for the prior topic. No free food for the new topic.

PREMIER'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS TO PARLIAMENT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Six months ago today, Mr. Speaker I professionally and collegially invited the Premier to rectify some oversights and provide reports to this House that were legally required. Six months today.

Now, while he has presented some, we are still in arrears by three years of reports. These are the reports for the Premier's, Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' staff, i.e., who are the political people that they hired, who they were, what they are getting paid, and what they were doing. As we have already covered (but I have the privilege to cover it again), required by law to make this report.

And his last correspondence to me, which I quoted two weeks ago, is that he is electing not to.

I do not know about you, Mr. Speaker, and I do not speak for you, but as a Member of this House, I personally find that very disrespectful to me as a Member of Parliament. And I obviously cannot speak on behalf of other parliamentarians. But what kind of operation is it?

I see the Premier's making a come-along, come-along now.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not talking to you!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: What kind of operation is it, Mr. Speaker, where the leaders of this country can pick and choose what laws they want to follow?

I think it is embarrassing, and I think the Front Bench should hold him accountable. And they should be embarrassed. And I do not know how you were raised, Mr. Speaker, but the way I was raised, you could learn a lot—

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You can learn a lot about a person by the way they handle the little things, Mr. Speaker. You can learn a lot.

And I am going to make a contrast, and I know we are not going to get into Sir John [Swan], today. But we can certainly look at his role as Premier, and you could say he transformed the country. And many Bermudians' lives were transformed. And we look back at the leadership of this . . . I am going to just use the word "so-called" (in my opinion), Mr. Speaker, so-called leader—

The Speaker: Don't, don't, don't, don't—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Because a leader leads to—

Hon. E. David Burt: Come on.

The Speaker: Well, you were okay, but that one word—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: All right. Well, let me rewind, let me rewind—

The Speaker: Yes, just restate that, please.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Let me rewind. And if we look back at the record, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: One little word can turn a good track off.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh, yes, you are right. Sorry. You are right.

The Speaker: You are on a good track.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You are right.

Like I said, you can learn a lot about a person by the way they handle the little things. And if they cannot even

give you the respect to do the little things right, is it any surprise that the big things are not being done right?

And I said I felt disrespected. I think the people of Bermuda should feel disrespected that the Premier seems to be picking and choosing which laws he wants to follow. And I discussed in our prior session how that must feel for somebody who is stuck dealing with planning and getting in trouble for not getting some arcane piece of law right.

And then I talked about the little things and what they mean about the big things. And I talked about Sir John, whose leadership transformed lives. And if you cannot get the little things right, you are not getting the big things right.

What are the big things not getting right here? And that if I was leader of the country right now, I would be embarrassed about: education in shambles.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You won't have to worry about that now.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I hear a lot of laughing. I know the people who are listening to this now, whose children are in the public school system do not think it is very funny.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Health care system in shambles. And I know those people who have family members waiting in line in the hallways in the emergency room do not think it is funny.

People dying on the roads for infrastructure not maintained, shambles. Shrinking population—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker the Honourable Member is misleading House and misleading the public. He is talking about the state of roads causing deaths in this country is way offline. It is way offline.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, it is not.

The Speaker: Ah—

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

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Really.

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

An Hon. Member: Really?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The state of the roads are causing deaths in this country?

An Hon. Member: Really?

Another Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Put your microphone on and say that. Put your microphone on and say it for the record.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Member was stating his viewpoint. Let him just finish on his viewpoint. If he goes too far off the line, of course, I will pull him back in but let him finish his viewpoint.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Like I said, Mr. Speaker, the state of the roads is shambolic. The shrinking population is shambolic.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The local population is shrinking; that is the legacy of the individual leading this Government, who cannot even be bothered to file the reports that Parliament requires.

And I look at the whole front bench, and I ask, *Is that the behaviour you support?* Because we know the way a person deals with their little things is how they deal with their big things.

I look at the back bench, conceptually speaking, and I ask them the same questions: *Will you hold your leader accountable to follow the law, and to treat this House with respect and the people of Bermuda with respect? And will you do what is required to get the results this country needs?* Because I am not seeing it.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . MP Swan.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

PREMIER'S LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL RECORD, SUPPORT FOR

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I had no intention of speaking this evening

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But sometimes you just got to just come to the wicket.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently. And I certainly have learned over the many years to read between the lines. There's a saying that I learned in Opposition [there] is a lot that can slip between the cup and lip. Certainly, a lot can be gleaned by what is not being said.

I have run three elections since 2017 under the premiership of Mr. E. David Burt, a premiership that will come to a conclusion in October. I have been around a long time, and I just want to say that it's very easy, particularly in Opposition, to be irresponsible, because you don't have the opportunity at that particular time to run the Government. So, what you say, what you imply, what you insinuate is part of a strategy. And I know that an Opposition that has plenty of money at its personal discretion certainly has the type of persons advising that will tell you what to say, what buttons to push.

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

We are not going to let him go too far with this speech.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House, insinuating all kinds of things. How in the world can he speak to a party that he has no understanding of what's going on behind the scenes? He might with the UBP, because he was a member there.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But certainly not the OBA, its finances, and who is advising. And to insinuate improper motive of getting advice to do whatever to the Government is just wrong. He's misleading the House. It's unnecessary.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Member, just be. . . I am cautioning everybody today, because I don't want us to get too off track anyway. Everybody has been short.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I'm not getting off track.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

I reeled him in not to go, because he started to go down a road, and I pulled him back on when he started to go personal. And I am just going to advise everybody; it's been quite a good day today. We have had short speeches on the motion to adjourn. Everyone seems to want to leave at a reasonable time. But if we go down the wrong road, it's going to incite us to stay longer.

So just be mindful of how far we go over that edge.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Opposition Whip protests this too much. Nobody knows better than me that I am not a member of the OBA.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Nobody knows better than me that the records of the UBP ended up . . . didn't end up with me when I ran, when I stood and served my term out as I was elected, as I promised the people. I wouldn't change my name to be and act the same way as I saw other people act. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. So, the Opposition Whip is going down a road that I have no intentions of going tonight. But, you know?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member again is misleading the House. He's saying he didn't intend to go down that road. He instigated the road. He paved the road. He put the lights on the road just now.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay, okay.

[Inaudible interjection, laughter and desk thumping]

An Hon. Member: He's complaining about the road we paved. And he's saying we ain't paved the road.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Make up your mind.

Another Hon. Member: That's a UBP road.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP, speak to the Chair.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I think, I know this much. I had a lot of experience being in Opposition. But the one thing I did, I gave respect and deference and learned

from the greatest Opposition this country had for 30 years, who came to this country with solutions that the Government that I was a part of took.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know better than me that that is the truth, that many a Government Bill that came to the House was because of an Opposition, a PLP Opposition, putting forward recommendations.

And I know from where I sit what I see. And I'm entitled to interpret. I am entitled to my opinion on what I see from an Opposition.

Now, I was just getting ready before the Honourable Member . . . and I think he probably knew where I was going, so he wanted to sort of take me off the track. But I won't be deterred. I was going to speak because at that particular time I was standing in support of a leader who I have worked with since 2017. And I have always been a person that supported the leadership that led me. Let me make it clear.

I have always . . . I have served several different leaders in my life in politics. And I have supported . . . and I have never undermined not one leader that I served under. That's probably why I was the leader of the Senate in the Opposition for three different leaders for nine years, because I know what it is to come to a House and respect the person who's leading and not undermine them.

And I certainly know where many bodies are buried in this country over a long period of time. And I am not going there today.

But I am going to tell you what, I am just going to speak to the record since 2017 of the persons in the Opposition [who] come here and very cleverly, very cleverly (and I give them credit for it, right?)—and that's what they are supposed to do—come here and tickle up the Government.

An Hon. Member: Tickle up.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And they are trying. And they try week after week.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Not too dissimilar to the recession that came in 2007 that the then Opposition blamed on the PLP, yes. And most of the people in the country thought that XL went down to [\$]2 because of PLP policies, AIG changed their name to Chartis because of PLP policies. Madoff . . . Madoff made off, and Stanford made off, and all these, and British American went out of business. All this bad stuff was happening because of the PLP.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what Oppositions do.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And that's what people do. They buy into what you can say that tickles their fancy.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I was around and saw what had to be done during the recession. A Government had a choice to turn its back on people or put out a safety net. In Opposition, I did see the PLP go into deficit spending during 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12, and

go into deficit spending. Why? Because a recession came, not of their doing, but of a global doing.

I saw a PLP Government in 2021 . . . 2020, a Government that I was a part of, roll up its sleeve and come to the assistance of the people of this country in an unprecedented way. I saw a Government in 2017/18, make a commitment to prudent physical discipline in order to pay down the debt, and was on course to do that. How do you do that? With balanced budgets. On course to do it, until what? A global pandemic struck this country, and then we had to change course.

At the same time, I saw Southampton Princess no longer. And we . . . and I'm not going into the why's and the wherefore's. I'll save it for somebody else who might want to be in a contribution and support what I'm saying. I saw persons not support the Government's actions to make decisions to cause the Princess to be . . . inject hundreds of millions of dollars into this economy, which has been so up until now, and now we are looking and asking when is it going to be open? I hope it's soon. And yes, decisions had to be made. Choices were made by some people that didn't support that. Okay?

So, I'm here to say that it's easy. And I've seen the leader that I support called everything. Every . . . you think of it. And you know what? I see the same thing happening all over again. I know this: There isn't a PLP leader, present, past, or the future, who would meet the standards of conservative Bermuda. Let me repeat myself. You'll love them right up until . . . you'll love them right up until they become the PLP leader. And then, my friend, let me remind everybody the course of action changes. And the whisper campaigns. A lot can slip between a cup and a lip. Oh, yes, my *bye*. I've been around.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm just saying that the fact that this PLP Government, for the benefit of this country, set a course of more fiscal discipline spending in order to cause us to be in a projected position to pay down the debt.

And you know what? I remember, and, you know, I play a sport. I am a professional athlete. I don't have to talk about mine at all today, but I can tell you what any great athlete would tell you, and anyone aspiring to be one, it's the time you put in the nets. It's the time you put into practice. You make your successful day by hard work ahead of time. The harder you work, the luckier you sometimes can get. And I am sure the Opposition Leader would know a little bit about that. Somebody says, *Boy, that person was lucky and won*. And he would know how hard they practiced when no one else was working.

Well, had this Government not been acting in a fiscally disciplined manner when our luck happened, that corporate income tax came to our benefit, we wouldn't be paying down the debt, some \$600 million in January, would we? We would be just playing catch-up, wouldn't we? Because of our actions, our deeds, the same persons.

Let me tell you something. If the person that . . . and I walked down because I was going to say the Member was imputing improper personal motives on the Premier. That's what got me to leave up top and come back down

here, because it was wrong. Because let me tell you something. The current Premier, Honourable E. David Burt, is the Finance Minister. Not too dissimilar to who? A former leader of the country who held the post of Finance Minister as well. May or may not have kept it the whole time that he was Leader, but I do believe that the late Sir David Gibbons did so. And he said, *I'll let the record speak for [itself]*.

Let me tell you this. Had Mr. E. David Burt been overseas representing Bermuda in any financial platform that he's done over the last five years, in a way that was detrimental to the economic success of the number one breadwinner of this country, we would not have had to be coming up here trying to cause innuendos. They would have led that charge. But they haven't had to, have they? Not one dickie bird. Because he's done a good job representing all of us.

And so, when I hear . . . and you know, like . . . man, I have been . . . my Troy lost to the Mountaineers. I've been up in the mountains of West Virginia and Virginia. I know what it's like up there. I was hoping we'd get a piece of them, us country boys from down in Alabama, but we didn't. They got a piece of us.

But as I know a little bit about where I've walked in life, Mr. Speaker. I know a little bit about all of that. And so sometimes I can *feel* what's trying to be conveyed. And I just felt it necessary to say in the three terms that I've run . . . and it wasn't a person that was my choice at the beginning, but I support leadership. And I would encourage, if there's anything that I can convey upon anybody that's aspiring to get into politics, who's in politics, who's learning to learn the way, learn how to be a team. I'm a team player when it came to leading my Trojans back in the 1970s. Learn to be a team. There's a lot in that. And learn that sometimes your foe can prey upon a crack in your arsenal. No pun intended, but they won the league this year.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that as I heard that, I just wanted to say, just as . . . and I coined the phrase that he used to say all the time. And there are two persons who had sayings back then that I used to appreciate. The Honourable Simmons says, I speak on behalf, I represent the workers. *I speak on behalf of the workers*. I hear that today like I heard it when he used to say it. And I also hear the late Sir David, and both of them late, say, you know, *I'll let the record speak for itself*.

E. David Burt's record on behalf of this country will speak for itself. It's there. And if he didn't serve this country as a good Finance Minister and a person prepared to roll up his sleeve and make sure that we have [Southampton] Princess . . . we passed today, Mr. Speaker. We passed today a concession order. The opportunity to invest in this country is ripe. (Not "right"; "Ripe" with a "p.") Why? Because of good financial management of this country, of which I'm prepared to say I'm proud of.

And so, I take offence of what I heard being implied. And that's on me because that's how I'm affected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does there any other Member wish to make a comment at this point?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening.

CARICOM MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I know the hour is not officially late but late based on what we expected to be here, how long. But I wanted to briefly just circle back to National Heroes Day and the line and link that my colleague MP Famous and also Minister Furbert had shared previously.

And as we reflect on the consultative process and also reflect on Monday and what we are commemorating as National Heroes, we first honour and acknowledge that even through our naming of three National Heroes, that three of them have clear connections and historical ties to the region. And we saw it fitting even at that time to acknowledge not only their impact for Bermuda . . . we talk about Dr. E. F. Gordon having been born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, who was a notable voice of the workers and the unions in Bermuda, and impactful . . . and a shape-shifter in our context.

We think about also Mary Prince, whose journey took us to through her journey to Turks and Caicos and eventually settling in Antigua. And again, as individuals who we acknowledge and also have as part of our national hero and a national identity in Bermuda, the inexplicable links to the Caribbean and the region cannot be ignored.

We must acknowledge, even as I hear, even while we're in this Honourable House, the tremor of celebrations around us here in Bermuda. When we are celebrating Carnival during this weekend and its alignment to our cultural heritage and in celebration of those ties that we have saw fit to acknowledge and commemorate. There are persons in our context that ask about what is the benefit that they might see themselves more informed just by looking around us.

So, we see the economic and tourism opportunities that exist, even from association through deeper ties and deeper opportunities, like Minister Furbert spoke to. We can see further access for those who seek to be having opportunities for themselves that they currently are restricted from having access to. We talk about scholarships and opportunities for young persons.

Having recently participated in a radio interview, I reflect on a caller's contribution where she riddled all over the numerous islands that she had the benefit of working [in] and establishing an opportunity to live throughout the region. And when asked about the duty that the Government then has to create and facilitate those same opportunities for young Bermudians, it was then a, *Well, no, my circumstance was completely different*. As if a Bermudian in Bermuda, having returned from school would not be deemed eligible to take advantage of work opportunities

throughout the region. And there was something so bespoke that would not allow for a Bermudian to take advantage of these opportunities.

What it speaks to is a way of thinking. And you see it evident in the way in which certain persons would speak to the association with CARICOM, about the idea that it would be okay for some to go and work in the region but not allow for the facilitation of the same for others.

We see the opportunity that businesses have taken as individuals, individual corporations who have private interests. And we see that they have deemed it beneficial and are flocking there all in our faces, all while saying what is not good for us. And the question then becomes, and the responsibility as Government is to act on behalf of the people who cannot act for themselves. The question becomes, *Who is fighting for the people to be able to have access to those same opportunities?*

The cultural alignment and CARIFESTA is one. Yesterday, having seen a band perform and support Bermudians at CARIFESTA, and now here as part of our Carnival celebration supporting Bermudian talent, exposing them to a different style and a different standard that the region has and perpetuates. They have Soca Monarch and other things in their context, and you see the drive and the dedication of Bermudians trying to celebrate our cultural product and showcase our cultural product at that standard.

It is no secret that Trinidad is one of the highest standards of cultural, particularly around Carnival, representation and celebration. And you see the fruits of both that exposure and the fruits of that connectivity through our talent here in Bermuda.

And so, when we talk about *The Story of Us*, this is a story of giving nod to our history. But also recognising that the story of us is still being written and is still unfolding. And the story of us that says what we can collectively decide as a country that has already shown fruits of benefits of association can seek to benefit greater. It also tells us a story about what happens when we connect, what happens when we align ourselves, what happens when businesses see connectivity and can have greater benefit economically from that association.

The fear that seems to be aligned to greater cooperation is not understood, especially when we see countries like in the OECD and through the EU and the creation of even the CARICOM itself centred around fostering collaboration and ties and shared connectivity and shared trade and the opportunities that would be eligible to bring up a community that is not defined by geography, because many of the CARICOM full members are not in the Caribbean Sea. So not defined by geography, but defined by a mandate, defined by an anchor that says this is how we wish to evolve together.

And I invite people to tell me about an organisation, association, or a country that is perfect. Find me a country without crime. Find me an association that is without differing ideas. Find me an organisation that is perfectly suitable and does not offer . . . that offers a perfect experience. Because we are imperfect people and we operate in these

organisations, the organisations will have their flaws. But it doesn't remove its core purpose, it doesn't remove its core identity, and it doesn't remove our identity should we wish to have deeper association.

Nor does it redefine our identity through deeper association. And so, *The Story of Us* invites all of Bermuda to define what the next chapter will be, how we will seek to align ourselves. Will we wish to benefit but not also contribute? Will we seek to only be the respondents to world and shifting events? I think about what takes place when we see on the world stage countries who have defined who they no longer will do trade relations with, countries that have defined who they no longer will accept X, Y, and Z from. Are we looking for the opportunity for even the region that we already are connected to, to then determine who they will no longer connect with as well?

What happens to our CARIFESTA? What happens to CARIFTA? Where will we compete? Where will Bermuda wave its flag? Because in every other UN location, Bermuda's flag actually does not stand foot in these places. So where will we be? Is our identity really rooted in a sense of comfort that actually isn't factually represented? Where will we be if we don't have these opportunities that we enjoy, that we love, that we celebrate Bermudian talent being recognised and developed and pruned? I wonder.

The future that we wish to be written is up to us. Nothing has to be perfect. It requires a level of accountability. And the questions and the things that members of the public have engaged with the Ministry of Home Affairs throughout its consultation will be refined in the White Paper. It will be presented in the White Paper that we've pledged through the process that this House has defined at the outset. I thank Minister Furbert, and MP Famous for his support, having engaged with leaders across the region through his talk show. I thank even Colonel Burch having invited me to discuss the opportunities and the communities of St. George's and Somerset also for participating meaningfully.

It is up to us to define what is best for us. It is up to us to not respond to the shifting ties that we often have to do.

On Wednesday, I attended the Google subsea cable [landings], and I was reflective of a regional partner who has determined Bermuda to be, through Google's association, a place that it sees business. But what was most instructive is that in his remarks he talked about the parallel of the subsea cable to the Bermuda's beginnings as part of the slip [*sic*] route and the slip [*sic*] trade. The sloop trade, sorry. And it was most instructive that someone who is not organically a part of our context could identify the strength of our connectivity to the region as a partner during parallels to the technology and how it can also facilitate greater connectivity throughout the region. It talked about Bermuda as being part of what they see as greater regional integration and connectivity.

But, of course, we need someone else to tell us about who we are.

I thought it interesting that of all the things that he contributed in his remarks, having not been to Bermuda before, that he saw that in us. And so, it then invites us to see ourselves.

The consultation is closed, but I am thankful for the meaningful feedback that came. I'm even thankful for the critique because it only helps us to refine as a country and as a Government. As a people, we can choose our next steps. And I do look forward to the meaningful engagement in future conversations about this. I do invite people to still look at the commentary to best inform themselves, because I see commentary that is not informed by the truth. And I do charge every representative of people in this Honourable House to have the facts, because it no longer is the responsibility of the Government alone when there are 36 of us in this House that represent communities. And it becomes our added obligation to have the facts and at least give them that.

We get paid every month. And so at least we should be able to do that. Even if it is not the position, it is what the facts of what the document or what the Government has said, and said clearly. It is not up to me alone.

So, I do thank the other MPs and Members who have been a part of that community to sell and share the message of what is already a part of our history, already a part of what we deserve. And I do look forward to greater support in the future because this is what is best in Bermuda's interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other . . . Opposition Leader.

Hon. Ben Smith: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening.

PLEADING FOR RESPONSIBLE SAFE CONDUCT OVER HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, as we are heading into a holiday weekend, I am mindful that on several occasions I have given a similar speech, which is we are looking into a weekend that we are hoping that we are going to have positive, safe environment when the next time we sit on the 26th.

Unfortunately, the last time that I had to give, I gave this speech with this hope. When we returned, we had had some violence. We had had deaths on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that as a community we start to really take ownership of what we do as individuals. Everybody in our community has different things that they will do to celebrate over this weekend. Some people don't even know that we have heroes. Some people don't have any thought about what this weekend is supposed to represent. Many are just having fun.

But, Mr. Speaker, whatever is going to happen, it has to be done safely because the speeches reminding

people over and over again, trying to do whatever we can to change the behaviour seems to be falling on deaf ears.

It doesn't take very long from whatever direction any of us has to go tonight to see that the behaviour on the road does not change, regardless of what the police say, whatever committee we put in place, whether we educate people, whether we put it on the news, whether we put it on the back of a bus. It does not matter because our population does not seem to be paying attention to those words, to that information.

And once again, it does not matter whether we want to have a fun, safe weekend when there are people within our community that are right now trying to figure out how they can do damage. And it's our job here to try to put policies and laws in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, the truth is most of the time we're actually just being more punitive to the people that already follow rules.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: That's what we end up doing. If we have speed cameras and speed bumps and all those things that we think we're putting in place, the group that actually was already following the rules are the ones who are going to end up frustrated with all these changes while the behaviour of parts of our community doesn't change.

I was leaving swim practice at the National Sports Centre, and I watched a young man speed along that road and take both of those speed bumps at full throttle with not even . . . he wasn't thinking about anybody else. He was going from wherever he thought he was going to go. And the truth is, if something had happened to him, he wouldn't even know the suffering that he was leaving behind him.

And you're seeing the messages on social media where people are saying, *Listen, our young people are behaving so badly, they don't realise tomorrow's not promised.* And we have a community where our population is shrinking. We cannot afford to lose another young person.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are several things that have to be addressed in our community. And we know that there are real issues within our community, but we cannot change anything without personal responsibility. That has to be the number one change. People, individuals, have to start to take this on themselves and say, *I will change.* And it will start with a few individuals and then turn to neighbourhoods and then communities, and that is how we will take this over. But until that process begins, and it hasn't begun yet, how many times do we have to return to this House and give condolences for something that was preventable?

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everybody here and everybody in the listening public a safe and fun holiday weekend. One more time, not only personal responsibility, make sure that if you see somebody that is drinking too much, they are not getting in a vehicle. They won't be operating a vehicle.

If you see somebody that they're getting agitated, take the time, talk to them. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have mental health issues in our community where people are

trauma, they have trauma, and that trauma with alcohol and drugs turns into violence. We have this issue.

So, while you are having fun, make sure you're doing it responsibly and make sure if you see one of your friends, one of your relatives, pull them aside and say, *Enough is enough, and maybe you should take a little time out.* Be responsible over this weekend so that everybody can have fun, and on the other side of this weekend, everybody will be safe.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and happy holiday weekend to everybody.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right, Mr. Speaker.

Can I get a clock, please, of 20 minutes?

The Speaker: Oh, so you needed that?

[Laughter]

PLP GOVERNMENT NOT SPENDING ENERGY LOOKING BACKWARDS

Hon. E. David Burt: We shall see.

Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly you would know that I am incredibly anxious to get out of this House, not for any reason other than there are 14 persons who have flown into the country to visit me this weekend for a Carnival weekend, and some of them have flown halfway around the world. So, I certainly want to make sure that I go and see them.

However, Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, the Honourable Member from constituency 25, the Shadow Minister of Finance, has returned to the same matter that he did the last session, Mr. Speaker. And last week, two weeks ago, I was tired, very tired, having dealt with things.

But this week, I am not going to let it go, no matter if my friends have to wait for me for another half an hour. And I know that my friends and family are actually out right now enjoying local music at an event full of local Bermudian artists.

But now, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear on this particular matter, so that people of the country can understand. We have an Act of Parliament. The current report was tabled two weeks ago, I do believe. The reports for the two years prior were tabled. And as it related to some older reports, I have been clear with the Honourable Member in writing that I gave no commitment to reconstruct historical reports from years ago, because the public service resources required to do that are, in my view, better used advancing the work that Bermudians elected this Government to deliver.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: How is the Premier—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He has no discretion as to whether these reports are supplied or not.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: Oh, Lord.

The Speaker: Okay. Let him make his presentation.

Hon. E. David Burt: See, here's the problem, Mr. Speaker. This Honourable Member will stand up, pontificate for as much as he wants,—

An Hon. Member: —Give his opinion.—

Hon. E. David Burt: —and will not even—give his opinion and will not listen to the response.

And I'm grateful, Mr. Speaker, that you stopped him, because he does this all the time.

An Hon. Member: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, I will continue, Mr. Speaker.

I gave no commitment to reconstruct historical reports from many years ago, because the public service resources required to do that are, in my view, better used in advancing the work Bermudians elected this Government to deliver. That is not hidden. That is not secret. That is not something that has been uncovered. I told the Honourable Member that plainly in written communication.

He is entitled to disagree, which clearly, he has. He's entitled to say that in his view, public officers should be directed away from current priorities to reconstruct old administrative reports. That is his position, and he's fine to hold it.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Premier is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker. That's not what I said.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. He expressed if that's your opinion, you say it in an opinion form.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He can have that view, Mr. Speaker. That is fine for him to hold. But I do not accept his attempt to turn this disagreement into some grand personal allegation against me, another speech about record, leadership, or what I see is a complete and, I would say, repeated fixation.

But allow me to say this, Mr. Speaker. This Government has a responsibility to govern. That means that we will set our priorities, we will use limited public resources wisely, and we will focus the public service on the work that affects the lives of Bermudians now.

And what is that work, Mr. Speaker? That work is expanding health care for seniors and working families, which we have done. It is expanding prescription drug coverage under FutureCare and introducing it under HIP, which we have done. It is delivering annual health exams for HIP and FutureCare policyholders without co-pays, which we have done. It is advancing universal health care and building the core benefits package to be delivered later this year, which we are doing.

It is increasing pensions for seniors every year since taking office and now bringing legislation to provide an increase to public sector retirees whose pensions have been frozen since 2014.

It is about making record investments in affordable housing, continued delivery on affordable housing. It is expanding Bermuda Housing Corporation stock, renovating units, advancing new residential development, and investing over \$100 million to put more Bermudian families under secure roofs.

It's about the work of which we did in the Mortgage Guarantee Programme, reducing down payments from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, lowering interest rates, raising the stamp duty exemption, and making sure that multiple dozens of Bermudians were able to own their home.

It is about reducing payroll taxes to workers for the lowest level in history when that government, or sorry, that Opposition, made them the highest level in history.

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: It is about making sure that we deliver this country's first statutory minimum wage.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. E. David Burt: It is about introducing paternity leave in this country and expanding maternity leave. It is about reducing . . . doing our best to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, which is a global matter, by eliminating duty on essential items and freezing fuel prices not once but twice during periods of global instability.

That is what we are focused on, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to be focused.

I went to the Bermuda College graduation a couple of weeks ago.

An Hon. Member: Say it.

Hon. E. David Burt: And the president of Bermuda College stood up and asked the persons there who were attending the Bermuda College on a College Promise scholarship or financial assistance. And half of that room stood up, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: And it is that Opposition, Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: They cut it!

Hon. E. David Burt: —that when we introduced free Bermuda College said, *No, find your money to pay for it.*

An Hon. Member: No way.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is what they did, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's right. That's what they did.

Hon. E. David Burt: And they're talking about a report?

Well, you know what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker? We are talking about the young people who have opportunities because this Government has a different vision, Mr. Speaker. And the Honourable Member can get up and pontificate every week. But we will not be deterred in delivering our election manifesto, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: No, we will not.

Hon. E. David Burt: We will not be deterred in delivering our election manifesto.

We have a group of committed Ministers. We have a group of committed Backbenchers who are committed to following through on the promises and pledges that we made to this electorate. And yes, it is about diversifying our economy through digital finance, making sure that we continue to build international business and certainly turning to a technology future.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Two days ago, the Honourable Member was there—

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

Hon. E. David Burt: —with Google.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: I can assure you Google isn't worried about four years' old administrative reports, Mr. Speaker.

They're worried about the investment that they're going to deliver in the communities inside of this country, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are focused on, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that is the contrast. He can spend his time talking about reports from four years ago. But this Government, Mr. Speaker, is focused on expanding health care access, delivering affordable housing, making a more secure future for our seniors, continuing to invest

resources into public education, tax relief for our persons, our workers and our businesses, cost of living relief, jobs and economic growth which we are continuing to deliver.

And so, he can come back to it every week, Mr. Speaker, but trust and believe I will get up every single week for the rest of the time that I am the Premier of this country and remind—

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

Hon. E. David Burt: And remind this country of the record, the difference and the change.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Because nine years ago, students could not go to Bermuda College for free.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Nine years ago, seniors could not get a health exam without a copay. There are many things that are different now than they were nine years ago. And let's be clear, there will be more that we will deliver over the next four and a half months, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Increase in pensions!

Hon. E. David Burt: There will be more that we will deliver over the next four and a half months.

And so, I stand by this. The limited resources of the public service should be focused on delivering for the people of Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, we inherited, let's not forget, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. E. David Burt: —inherited massive deficits. Inherited significant debt.

An Hon. Member: Inherited?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We inherited a failed Morgan Point project that cost taxpayers over \$200 million. But guess what we did, Mr. Speaker? We turned it all around. Managed a once-in-a-century pandemic. Managed the 40-year-high global inflation, and through all of it all, this Government kept on delivering.

So, here's what I'll say, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to spend our energy as a Government looking backwards.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: The people are asking us to deliver on our election manifesto, and this Cabinet, supported by this Backbench, is doing just that. That is what we've done, Mr. Speaker. That is what we will continue to do.

NATIONAL HEROES DAY

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, let me turn to the issue at hand, Mr. Speaker. National Heroes Day. As stated by the Honourable Member, the Leader of the Opposition, it is a weekend, and it is tradition that when the House of Assembly closes on Friday in advance of the long holiday weekend on our last sitting, we wish members of the community well.

I think it is fitting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the hotels of this Island are completely full.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Uh-oh.

Hon. E. David Burt: The planes coming in are completely full. The work of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, the work of the Bermuda Tourism Authority, the work of our partners, the work of the newly formed Entertainment Committee, making sure that we continue to promote and have events that attract people to this country should be applauded.

But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we must make sure that we enjoy this weekend responsibly. And so, I echo the comments of the Opposition Leader, which are no different than the comments that were made from the Minister of Health, who spoke about, you know, making sure that we keep our hygiene in a Carnival situation,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —from the Minister of National Security urging safety, and certainly from the Minister of Transport making sure that we have safe road use.

And so, I would encourage everyone, as we enjoy this weekend, as I will state the statement which was issued from myself as the Leader of the Government earlier today. Because though there is a celebration, it is reminding that it is a celebration of our National Heroes. And at that point in time that we celebrate our National Heroes, there are many in this country who are mourning the death of a National Hero. And I know that the Ministry of Culture is going to make sure that that particular matter is formally part of the festivities which will take place on National Heroes Day on Monday.

But I think that it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we remember and recollect. And I think the Honourable Member would be good to take heed of the comments that the late John Swan had left in his open letter to the public.

So, in that case, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask that we remember that there's far more that we agree on than we disagree on. And I hope that we will come together and

celebrate National Heroes Day in a way fitting of this country.

To you, Mr. Speaker, have a wonderful weekend and I'll see you at our special sitting.

[Desk thumping]

SPECIAL JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION TO HONOUR SIR JOHN SWAN, KBE, JP

The Speaker: Members, with the day now coming to a close, I am going to make a few remarks just basically where you ended, Premier, in reference to when we come together for that special sitting.

Much has been said already this evening of what we traditionally say about this time, how we want everybody to remain safe, particularly on our roadways and byways, and that people ride and drive cautiously without alcohol and other things in their system. Much has been said so I won't do that traditional piece.

But we are in a mode where we're celebrating our heroes but also mourning the loss of a National Hero. And this House will sit on a special sitting before we come back to Parliament for parliament business. So just be mindful that once the arrangements are all confirmed the date will be conferred to all Members here.

But I want you to also understand that to be truly fitting to the recognition that the former Sir John deserves in his former roles that he's played in this country, we're going to have a special sitting not just for the joint Houses but it will be a special sitting of the CPA branch, which means any Member who served in Parliament or the Senate is a member of the CPA for life. So those former Members who have sat here before, who sat under the time of Sir John, will be able to join us in the Chamber to give remarks as well to make it all fitting.

So, when the final details are confirmed, it will be publicly shared amongst us all as to the date that we'll come back and celebrate that. Okay?

So, with that said, enjoy the holiday. Remember what it is, recognising heroes. And we all can be heroes by saving a life, encouraging others not to drink and drive and others to be respectful for one another.

With that, enjoy the holiday.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: And the House now stands adjourned.

[At 7:19 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 26 June 2026.]

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