



**2021/2022 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

November - December 2021

Virtual Sitzings

*Sittings 1 through 4 of the 2021/2022 Session
(pages 1–250 and INDEX)*

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

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
5 NOVEMBER 2021
12:30 PM***Sitting Number 1 of the 2021/2022 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Members, the House is now in session.
Ms. Beale, would you lead us in prayer?

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.
Members, we are now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES*[Minutes of 24 September 2021]*

The Speaker: The first item is the confirmation of Minutes from the 24th of September 2021.

Members, are there any amendments or adjustments, corrections needed?

There are none.

The Minutes will stand as printed.

*[Minutes of 24 September 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: I would just like to make two announcements.

THRONE SPEECH DELIVERED

The Speaker: The first is that Her Excellency the Governor has delivered the ¹[Throne Speech](#). And for those Members who were not present, copies are available for you at your respective head offices.

The second item is the report from the Parliamentary Sessional Committee on Standing Orders for the Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislature.

**PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONAL COMMITTEE
ON STANDING ORDERS REPORT****THE CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE**

The Speaker: Members of the Honourable House of Assembly, I have the honour to present [The Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislature](#) and the accompanying Report of the Standing Orders Committee.

The Committee met virtually on several occasions over the last year and a half to discuss and implement a code of conduct for Members of the House of Assembly. During these meetings, the Committee reviewed the *Recommended Benchmarks for Codes of Conduct applying to Members of Parliament* and the *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures* published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, better known to us as the CPA.

Additionally, the Committee looked at legislation such as the Employment Amendment Act 2000 and the Bribery Act 2016 to advocate for the codes best suited for our Legislature. Given the increasing complexity parliamentarians face on a daily basis, coupled with pressures on the parliamentary performance and being in the public spotlight, the implication of a code of conduct is a necessary first step.

Meetings involving discussions and examination on this matter were held on the following dates:

- 2 March 2020;
- 15 May 2020;
- 29 January 2021;
- 19 March 2021;
- 5 May 2021, and
- 2 July 2021.

Some key points: The Code of Conduct describes ethical standards of behaviour to guide and assist Members of the Legislature in the discharge of their obligations to the House of Assembly, their constituents, and members of the public.

Another key point is that the application of the Code of Conduct is limited to all aspects of the public life of a Member.

A further point is the establishment of a Bipartisan Committee of Members—Ethics, Complaints and Investigative Committee (we refer to this as ECIC)—to

¹ “Social Renewal & Economic Recovery *Working together to move Bermuda beyond the pandemic.*”

advise on ethical matters, conflicts of interest and any issues arising from the Code of Conduct.

A further point is the establishment of a Legislative Appeals Committee (the LAC) to act on appeals against a finding or sanction recommended by the ECIC.

To conclude, the Standing Orders Committee agreed that the Code of Conduct is fair and in line with international best practices. Above all, the code will greatly assist Members in the performance of their duties.

The Standing Orders Committee would also like to acknowledge the assistance and work performed by the Clerk of the Legislature, Ms. Shernette Wolfe.

Members, the Code of Conduct will be available to you on SharePoint. I suggest that we each print it out, read it and understand the guidelines that it has put in place for us on the conduct with which we conduct ourselves as Members of the Legislature.

With that, thank you. We move on.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: There is one item this morning in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister of Health.

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Minister.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 6) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
We now move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: There are none.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: There are none for today.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Again, none for today.

MATTER 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 two Bills to be introduced this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to introduce your Bill at this time?

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you . . . oh, good afternoon. You are correct. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

FIRST READING

CRUISE SHIPS (CASINOS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I introduce the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The next Bill is in the name of the Minister of Education.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me loud and clear?

The Speaker: Loud and clear.

BERMUDA NATIONAL TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, in light of the fact that today is the reading of the Throne Speech, which is the main business of the day, all other items on the Order Paper have been carried over.

So, Mr. Premier, would you like to move [the adjournment] at this time?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I do need to move a motion for the Throne Speech.

The Speaker: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes. You can move the Throne Speech so it will be open for next week, yes.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS 14 AND 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Orders 14 and 21 be suspended to enable me to move a motion related to the Governor's Speech from the Throne.

The Speaker: Any objections to that?
There are none.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 14 and 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue.

MOTION THAT THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH BE TAKEN AS READ AND SET DOWN FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT DAY OF MEETING

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speech with which Her Excellency the Governor was pleased to open the present session of Parliament be taken as read and that the said Speech be set down for consideration as the first Order of the Day for the next day of meeting.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Members, the motion that was just moved will enable us to deal with the Throne Speech as the first item of business when we return next Friday to do the business of the House.

[Motion carried: Speech from the Throne taken as read and set down for consideration at the next meeting.]

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: Mr. Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, November 12, [2021].

The Speaker: At 10:00 am.

Any objections to that?

No objections.

Thank you, Members. Enjoy the rest of your day. Have a good weekend. And we look forward to seeing you next week for a full discussion of the Throne Speech.

The House now stands adjourned.

[At 12:41 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 12 November 2021.]

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
12 NOVEMBER 2021
10:07 AM***Sitting Number 2 of the 2021/2022 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
Ms. Beale, would you like to lead us in prayer?

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]*

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

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES*[Minutes of 5 November 2021]*

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes have been circulated. Are there any amendments or adjustments to be made?

There are none.
The Minutes are confirmed as printed.

*[Minutes of 5 November 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: I have one announcement this morning.

**BERMUDA GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO
COVID-19: THE UNEMPLOYMENT
BENEFIT ADMINISTRATION**

The Speaker: His Honour the Speaker announces that he has received the Auditor General's Report entitled Government of Bermuda's Response to COVID-19: The Unemployment Benefit Administration. This report has been submitted to me in compliance with section 13 of the Audit Act 1990.

Thank you, Members.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There are none.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: Yes, we have Statements this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

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

**STEPS TAKEN TO LAUNCH
THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE [PMO]
TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN**

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the progress made toward the implementation of Bermuda's [Economic Recovery Plan](#).

Mr. Speaker, Members of this Honourable House will recall the tabling of Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan (which I may refer to in the Statement as ERP) by the Minister of Finance in March of this year and the subsequent debate on its contents. As a reminder, the Government undertook a three-phased approach to the development of the ERP.

Preparatory work in phase 1 involved identifying the objectives, the guiding principles and a preliminary list of initiatives, and was undertaken in July through September of 2020. Phase 2 involved the development of economic models, prioritisation of initiatives and an implementation plan, and took place from October 2020 to February 2021. Phase 3 involved the development of a *blueprint* ERP with a detailed plan

for effective and efficient implementation with appropriate Cabinet oversight.

When the plan was tabled in this Honourable House in March, implementation was already underway across the Government. Despite the pandemic, ministries and government agencies continued to refine and implement initiatives to support economic recovery under their areas of responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, as Her Excellency the Governor shared in the Speech from the Throne last Friday, and I quote, "Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan has 31 priority projects in 7 broad categories: Economic Diversification; Financial Markets; Infrastructure Investment; Expanding the Residential Population; Labour Market & Social Development; Healthcare Reform; and Regulatory Reform."

Honourable Members and the public can remain informed about the progress of Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan by visiting gov.bm/economicrecovery on the government portal. At noon today, Mr. Speaker, this webpage will be updated to provide the current status of all 31 priority initiatives. During phase 2, these 31 initiatives were independently confirmed as the projects that will best create economic growth in the short-to-medium term while meeting the objectives of increasing jobs, diversifying our economy and enhancing Bermuda's infrastructure for the future.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to share some updates with Honourable Members in advance of the new webpage that I previously mentioned. Out of the 31 priority projects contained in the Economic Recovery Plan, 9 of the 31 projects are already substantially complete. Other projects such as upgrading Bermuda's water and waste treatment infrastructure, which incorporates the replacing of the plant and equipment at Tynes Bay, have progressed. This is a high-priority infrastructure project for the Government, given that the existing plant has now exceeded its useful life. As a result, a cross-ministry team is already on an accelerated path to replace key assets and components within the plant in the short term with the ultimate goal of a fully refurbished and repurposed facility within the next three to four years.

Mr. Speaker, another project that has progressed is (and I quote from the ERP) "Complete the Shoreside Facility to process fish caught in Bermuda." A business plan for a Fisheries Development Centre is being completed under a steering committee led by the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Fishermen's Association of Bermuda. The plan will consider how such a facility will benefit the public, create opportunities to show a return on Government's investment, and offer additional options and cooperative [business] benefits to participating fishers. The plan will meet the current and future needs of the fishing industry, put fishers at the centre to best control their industry, take into consideration economic

conditions, as well as consider short-to-long-term fisheries development factors. The consultation thus far has moved the facility's planning from Marginal Wharf in St. David's to a location in the west end of the Island.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan states, and I quote, "Complete work to establish the Uptown Development Authority in North East Hamilton, whose mission will be to implement the North East Hamilton Development Plan and drive residential development projects in the area." Mr. Speaker, work on residential developments in Bermuda's economic empowerment zones to increase the supply of quality affordable residential accommodation, driving down rental costs, has also progressed. Guidelines for submitting applications for approved residential schemes within the economic empowerment zones have been developed by the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, with information for EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone] stakeholders, potential investors and the general public to be published later this month. Importantly, every approved scheme will create new jobs for Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, one of the 31 priority projects reads as follows: "Use BEDC resources to create an online [small to medium-sized enterprise] marketplace that will allow entrepreneurs easy access to sell their goods and services online without having to deal with costly individual setups, large monthly fees and merchant account complexities." Mr. Speaker, this initiative is substantially complete, and on November 29, for eMonday, the online marketplace at <http://www.bybermuda.bm> will launch. The platform, aptly named by Bermuda, is a local online marketplace where people come together to sell and buy unique Bermudian products and experiences.

Mr. Speaker, as the world grapples with the impact of climate change, renewable energy will become an increasingly important part of the global economy. An initiative in Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan states, and I quote, "Develop an energy regulatory sandbox that will encourage developers of new renewable energy technology to test their products in Bermuda, giving Bermudians access to new technology."

Mr. Speaker, a policy for creating an energy regulatory sandbox has already been produced. During this session, the Honourable House will consider a Bill to facilitate renewable energy technology developers testing their products in Bermuda. Additionally, the Government is currently in discussions with a company that will likely be the first applicant for a sandbox licence.

Mr. Speaker, legislation allowing Bermuda to become a hub for submarine communication cables is now in effect, with a plan for implementation developed by the Regulatory Authority in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Bermuda Business Development Agency. This progress fulfils the

objective stated in the plan to, and I quote, “introduce and establish sub-sea communications sector in Bermuda, supporting plans to develop a sub-sea telecommunications protection zone.” The Regulatory Authority of Bermuda is currently fielding enquiries for companies that are wishing to enter this space.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, in the area of health care, Bermuda’s Economic Recovery Plan states, and I quote, “Work with pharmacists, hospitals and physicians to reduce the costs of medications.” Legislation to pave the way for the establishment of a National Drug Formulary was passed by the Legislature in the last session to achieve this objective. The Bermuda Health Council, using recommendations from the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, will regulate the prices at which common essential medications, along with associated products and [devices] used in medical treatments, are sold to the public, thereby reducing the largest out-of-pocket health care expenditure for a large segment of the community.

Mr. Speaker, the coordination of implementation across the 31 diverse initiatives contained in Bermuda’s Economic Recovery Plan is being led by a team within the Cabinet Office reporting to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Development. The successful execution of these initiatives will ensure the Island is appropriately prepared to recover economically and socially as we move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Strong quality assurance, governance and monitoring processes are essential to this effort. The plan always intended that these functions would be undertaken by resources operating separately from those engaged in the day-to-day running of government.

Mr. Speaker, against this backdrop and with the assistance of BermudaFirst, the Government engaged with the Big Four consulting firms to determine the best way forward. Based on these collaborative discussions, KPMG was identified as the resource to launch the PMO [Project Management Office]. The initial contract valued at \$144,000 plus expenses was finalised in September and provides a lead consultant with extensive experience in economic recovery. At the conclusion of the KPMG engagement, the consultants will deliver a project management plan complete with resource requirements, key milestones and timelines, actions and enablers required to progress the 31 initiatives, which have not yet been completed; and a risk management regime to identify, prioritise, monitor and, where possible, mitigate risks. Upon delivery of the project management plan, further resource decisions concerning the PMO will be determined.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated in this Honourable House when we debated the plan in the last session, the PMO will be staffed by government and external resources with specific expertise. This may include a variety of consulting resources from a number of firms on an as-needed basis. The degree of support and expertise will inevitably vary based on the project, with

all initiatives subject to milestones and deliverables. As evidenced by the progress made to date, which again the public can view this afternoon at gov.bm/economicrecovery, ownership of each of the 31 initiatives has been assumed by the respective Ministry or government agency that has been indicated in the plan. Public officers are focused on finalising policies and implementing action plans. These steps are central to the project’s success, and a mechanism has been put in place to track progress; and the PMO will update the new webpage every month.

Mr. Speaker, while the future remains deeply uncertain, given public health conditions and the state of the global economy, Bermuda’s Economic Recovery Plan provides a blueprint for a successful recovery. Effective implementation is necessary to ensure Bermuda forges a new path to growth, employment and greater equity. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The next Statement this morning is from the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

HALF-YEAR FISCAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with a half-year report on the [Government’s fiscal performance](#).

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a material impact on the Bermuda economy and the Government’s fiscal position. However, significant work has been done by Government and the community to combat this virus and adapt to the *new normal*. As the half-year results highlight, the ongoing work and actions taken to date have had some positive results.

The headline numbers for the 2021/22 National Budget are a revenue target of \$998.9 million; current expenditure of \$1.03 billion, including debt service; capital expenditure of \$92.9 million; and a projected deficit of \$124.7 million.

Mr. Speaker, total revenues for the first half of fiscal 2021/22 are \$503.5 million (which is \$40.7 million, or 8.8 per cent, above September 2020) and broadly in line with the budget. This is mainly due to higher custom duty receipts, along with minor increases in payroll tax collections and stamp duties.

Of significance, Mr. Speaker, is the following: Customs duties were up by \$25.9 million (versus the first half of the 2020/21 fiscal year), or 7 per cent above budget. Payroll taxes were up by \$6 million when compared to the same period last year and

were on budget. Stamp duties were up by \$7.3 million, or 27 per cent above budget. Other receipts were 15 per cent below budget, with passenger taxes and transportation infrastructure tax receipts for the period reduced to almost negligible levels. Overall, due to the steady improvement in areas of the economy, the revenue collections in the second quarter of this year are generally tracking on budget.

Mr. Speaker, current expenditures (excluding debt service) for the period ending September 30, 2021, are \$50 million, or 11 per cent lower than when compared to the six months ending September 2020. Key factors included lower expenditures for the COVID-19 pandemic and unemployment benefits for this fiscal year when compared to 2020/21. In addition, there were positive impacts from the austerity measures put in place last year to mitigate to some extent the devastating effect that the pandemic was having on the economy,

Mr. Speaker, the highlights in relation to expenditures are as follows: Salaries and Wages were down by \$17.1 million, or 4 per cent below budget; and Employer Overhead was down by \$7.4 million, or 11 per cent below budget. These reductions reflect the critical cost control measures put in place in the summer of 2020, which concluded in August of 2021. Salary-related spend was also reduced by existing vacancies in the public sector. During this period, the Government spent \$20.7 million in COVID-19-related expenditures, of which \$9.2 million was for unemployment and supplemental benefits. We have also spent just over \$11.5 million for other COVID-19-related matters to keep Bermuda safe and secure. The overall spend in this regard, although lower than the corresponding period in 2020/21, has already exceeded the total estimated funding for the whole of this fiscal year. Costs incurred include the following:

- COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, vaccine administration, call centre operations and travel authorisation management—\$7.8 million;
- Molecular Diagnostic Lab operations—\$2.0 million; and
- spend related to the quarantine mandate—\$1.7 million.

Also during this period the Government has incurred additional expenditures of \$8.6 million which relate to significant government guarantee commitments made under the previous administration. This includes \$7.6 million expenditure for the first quarter of the Airport Revenue Guarantee and \$1.0 million in consultancy costs for Morgan's Point/Caroline Bay. These expenditures are anticipated to increase during the remainder of the 2021/22 fiscal year and to have a further negative impact on the government's fiscal position.

Overall, notwithstanding the COVID-19 impact and the additional guarantee-related expenditures, current expenditures, excluding debt service, are presently in line with the original annual estimate of

\$903 million, at \$456.7 million for the half-year. This highlights that the prudent and considered measures put in place in 2020, which have been continually monitored for effectiveness, have played a positive role in protecting the economy from further devastating damage.

It is recognised that in certain instances expenditures are not made evenly over the year and therefore may distort actuals when compared to budget. Further, with the expectation of continuing increases in COVID-related expenditure and certain other necessary costs, we continue to carefully evaluate the fiscal position and will, as necessary, take steps to limit expenditures where possible. Interest expenses and related facility fees are tracking in line with 2020 performance, notwithstanding the fact that the Government undertook additional borrowing last summer. Additional capital of \$1.35 billion, which was raised in August 2020, was able to be financed at historically lower rates than existing debt.

Mr. Speaker, I would also highlight that all of the Government's capital raise of \$1.35 billion was to provide funding of the government and its anticipated economic recovery over the next two to three years. Mr. Speaker, excluding debt service, the Government recorded a \$21.1 million current account surplus for the first six months of the year, compared to a \$71.4 million deficit in 2020. The all-inclusive deficit was \$43.3 million, compared to a projected deficit of \$135.8 million in 2020. The deficit was financed by the above-referenced capital raise. Mr. Speaker, gross debt at the end of September 2021 remains at \$3.35 billion. Net of the Sinking Fund balances, the debt was \$3.05 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that the Ministry of Finance is currently finalising its detailed assessment of the 2021/22 mid-year performance. This mid-year review will provide the Revised Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for fiscal 2021/22, along with economic data and actions required to remain within the 2021/22 budget deficit of \$124.7 million. I intend to report back to the House later in this session with the updated 2021/22 Revised Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that the budget deficit target for fiscal 2021/22 is not exceeded, given the current high level of public debt. The Ministry of Finance regards any breach of the deficit target to be a serious issue, as continuous increases in the deficit and debt levels will likely negatively impact Bermuda's credit rating and the cost of refinancing government debt in the future. In this regard, we would again note that over the next 24 months nearly \$1 billion of debt will have to be refinanced. Therefore, it is important that we continue to ensure that fiscal matters are managed in a prudent and considered way, and that we adhere to our commitments to balancing the budget by 2023/24.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I must remind all that we should continue to work together to successfully progress our lives beyond this pandemic, and to ensure that there is a sustained and shared economic recovery for our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Just a reminder to turn your video on, Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Oh, I thought I had; sorry.
Can you see me now?

The Speaker: We can see you now. Continue

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: All right. Thank you.

SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, on the 23rd of July 2021, I advised this Honourable House of the payments made at the outset in the project agreement between Skyport and the Bermuda Airport Authority. I wish to provide the House with an update on the latest [MRG \[minimum revenue guarantee\]](#) payment made to Skyport this month.

Mr. Speaker, on the 10th of October, Skyport provided the Airport Authority with a formal notice of the shortfall between the actual airport regulated revenue collected for the period from the 1st of July to the 30th of September 2021 and the guaranteed minimum regulated revenue for the same period, which was an amount totalling \$8,451,053.51.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I advised the House that the project agreement contains a pre-determined payment schedule of the MRG amounts for each calendar quarter of the 30-year contract. The Government continues to honour its obligations in this regard, including making the latest MRG payment of \$8,451,053.51 to Skyport.

Mr. Speaker, to date we have made five MRG payments to Skyport totalling \$40,964,566.74. Although we are trending in the right direction (meaning each consecutive payment has been lower than the previous one), even with the increased air routes and passenger traffic resulting from our new Air Service Development Strategy, we anticipate that MRG payments in 2022 could be over \$10 million.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. A nice, brief Statement this morning.

The next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister for Social Development and Seniors.

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

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION IN A PROTRACTED CRISIS

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to relay the issues related to social development and social protections in a protracted crisis, which were presented and discussed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Fourth Session of the Regional Conference on [Social Development](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean held from October 26 to October 28, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Bermuda has been living in a protracted crisis since March 2020 whereby our population has been facing heightened risk of death, disease and breakdown of livelihoods over an elongated period of time. The COVID-19 pandemic and damage spurring from our annual hurricane seasons require interventions that are framed as holistic approaches to development.

Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization [WHO] has estimated that an additional 38 billion COVID-19 vaccines are needed to reach the aspirational 70 per cent population coverage rate worldwide. Bermuda was commendably noted to be one of the five countries within the Latin America and Caribbean region who will meet the global COVID-19 vaccination coverage goal by the end of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is amongst the regions that have suffered the most economic and unemployment regression worldwide, and estimates show that only 5 per cent of our neighbouring countries will recover. The 2021 edition of the *Bermuda Job Market Employment Briefs* highlighted that between 2019 and 2020 we have seen the total jobs filled decrease by 5.7 per cent, which represents the largest year-over-year decrease since 2012. The social impacts of disasters are compounded by economic losses; there is a growing consensus that inequality is an enemy of productivity, learning and innovation. For Bermuda's vulnerable population, unequal access to health and social protection services has meant a hard choice between livelihood and exposure to contagion.

Mr. Speaker, through cross-jurisdictional analysis conducted by the United Nations and region-

all governments, it has been determined that women and young people have been the most impacted demographic by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent natural disasters. It is estimated that by the end of 2021, a total of 79 per cent of the population within Latin America and the Caribbean will earn revenues below the national and regional poverty lines. This an increase of 22 million people from 2020.

Recent data from the Department of Statistics reveal that in the one year, from 2019 to 2020, the disparities gap between our demographics have widened. In 2019 the pay difference between men and women was estimated to be 8.2 per cent. This rose to 9.7 per cent in 2020, further exacerbating gender-related issues. On racial terms, in 2019 the pay difference between Blacks and whites was calculated to be 36.3 per cent. This has risen to 39.1 per cent in 2020, deepening Bermuda's wealth distribution gap.

Mr. Speaker, echoing the sentiments from the Fourth Session of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, recovery from a social development crisis requires a government to *build forward better*, with a leave-no-one-behind approach with equality and sustainability. Transformational approaches should focus on guaranteeing income, food access, expenditure reduction and cash transfers.

Mr. Speaker, as we have all been impacted in one way or another by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, there is an urgent call by the international community to encourage governments to take a mainstream approach to mental health in incorporating support systems into social protection frameworks. Mr. Speaker, as we move to a post-pandemic state and attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change, governments within the Latin American and Caribbean region have recognised the need for creating a vulnerability index as a replacement for the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] as an indicator of development, inequality and stability of social protections.

Mr. Speaker, the public should be made aware that the UN Women of the Caribbean extended an invitation to have an initial dialogue with the Government of Bermuda. The aim of that meeting was to discuss strengthening the social frameworks that will build capacity, along with innovative financing opportunities to enhance Bermuda's social resilience.

Mr. Speaker, I will provide updates as these discussions progress.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE UPDATE

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, in this year's Throne Speech, the Government of Bermuda has reaffirmed its intention to implement universal health coverage for all residents. Our vision for health care seeks to ensure that "all people have equitable access to needed informative, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative essential health services, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that people do not suffer financial hardship when paying for these services and critical medicines."

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is fortunate in that we have a health system that is well developed and well supported by dedicated professionals. However, the overall affordability and sustainability of our health system is deeply concerning for this Government. Bermuda has one of the highest per capita health expenditures globally, but our population health outcomes do not reflect this. Continuing with the status quo in the hope that this situation resolves itself is not a [reasonable] option.

Mr. Speaker, change is required, and the journey is indeed complex and one which we will travel together for several years as we seek to ensure the following:

- better health outcomes, particularly of chronic disease management;
- essential health services that residents can be confident they can afford when they need them; and
- the elimination of waste and duplication when it occurs.

Having committed to [universal health coverage](#) [UHC], the Ministry of Health was tasked with developing the way forward. To do so, the Ministry brought together a core group of stakeholders from across our health system to serve as the UHC Steering Committee to develop the roadmap for strengthening Bermuda's health care. The UHC Steering Committee is led by the Ministry of Health and comprises representatives of BermudaFirst, the Bermuda Medical Doctors Association, the Bermuda Health Council, the Department of Health, the Bermuda Hospitals Board, the Health Insurance Department, the Ministry of Finance and a patient representative. Its work is supported by KPMG. In this process, Mr. Speaker, the [UHC] Steering Committee took note of health care systems in other jurisdictions large and small who have already taken their first steps on this journey. It is clear that there are many paths to reach universal health coverage, and UHC is very much advocated by the United Nations and World Health Organization. But the approach taken here on our Island must be Bermuda-centric.

Mr. Speaker, we do know that the goal of achieving universal health coverage will be achieved in stages, and these stages will take place over a number of years. It is our commitment to the people of Bermuda that we will keep them fully informed of the progress. As part of developing the roadmap, Mr.

Speaker, the UHC Steering Committee examined the current health system and identified a number of actions to prioritise for its strengthening. These can be grouped into the following three areas:

1. stewardship and governance;
2. health care service delivery; and
3. health system value and financing.

Taking each in its turn, Mr. Speaker, stewardship and governance is the foundational framework for the health system. This is where vision and strategy are set, population health needs are understood, transparent responsibility and accountability are established, and organisational and legal structures are implemented. For example, Mr. Speaker, with respect to responsibility and accountability, identified actions include setting standard metrics for measuring and monitoring systems and population health performance and for public reporting of the results. How does Bermuda measure up against other jurisdictions in terms of our population's health? How does Bermuda measure up in terms of best practices?

Secondly, strengthening health care service delivery involves ensuring all residents have equitable access to essential health care that is integrated in an efficient manner, and which produces good patient experiences and health outcomes. Identified actions in this area include determining the following: What are the essential health care services? What approach do we take to the delivery of these care services? How do we take advantage of advancements in information systems to better manage patient care?

Concerning the third work area, Mr. Speaker, health system value and financing, this is a very challenging aspect for Bermuda. As stated previously, our health expenditure is high and does not match our health outcomes. However, before making abrupt changes to achieve a sustainable health system, it is [critical] to fully understand current and future costs both at a system and individual patient level. Therefore, identified actions include, but are not limited to the following: confirming the current costs of care and how these costs are distributed; modelling future costs, including the do-nothing option; identifying where savings exist across the health system; and evaluating modern purchasing and procurement mechanisms so that we know how the essential benefits can be most effectively purchased. These steps and more constitute very necessary and responsible due diligence.

Mr. Speaker, while the pandemic delayed work on plans for universal health coverage as the Ministry, hospital, Health Council, physicians and allied professionals across Bermuda joined in the fight against COVID-19, this delay created space and time for the Ministry, working closely with the UHC Steering Committee, to develop a refreshed approach to health system change. And as a result, the many actions identified as necessary to strengthen Bermuda's health system are based on and framed by a patient-

focused approach that puts patient experiences and outcomes at the centre of the work on universal health coverage.

Mr. Speaker, year one of the initial three-year roadmap for universal health coverage is foundational in nature. Three of the year one areas of work are mentioned in the Throne Speech.

They are as follows: (1) digital health strategy, which involves establishing a national strategy for digital health care and data that leverage health information systems to harness improvements and efficiencies for patients, health care providers and health system payors; (2) integrated patient pathway for essential care. This involves implementing a *patient pathway* approach, which focuses on a patient's journey (or pathway) through the health care system, allows us to examine the fragmented components of health care and the costs involved at each point that care is delivered. A pathway can be a particular patient group (such as maternal childcare) or a disease (such as kidney disease or heart disease). By following a pathway from start to finish, we can better see opportunities to improve patient experiences and outcomes, as well as address any duplicative, wasteful use of resources; and (3) commence merging of administration of government health care plans. Mr. Speaker, to review and implement a merger of the administrative functions of the government plans is what this refers to. A portion of this work was undertaken when the Health Insurance Plan and FutureCare were consolidated under the Health Insurance Department. This administrative merger would represent the completion of this process and involve GEHI and funds controlled by Financial Assistance and other patient care subsidies.

The other areas of work in year one, Mr. Speaker, include the following: setting up the organisational structure for stewardship and governance (including new working groups for collaboration with stakeholders); determining the baselines required, for example, for our health needs and for the metrics to measure our performance; and establishing the economic case for strengthening our health system.

Mr. Speaker, vitally important for the work on universal health coverage is the engagement of and collaboration with the broad group of stakeholders who form part of Bermuda's health system. We have a direction of travel, but there are many questions to answer and decisions to make that will need broader input than is represented solely by the UHC Steering Committee or the Ministry itself. In the coming weeks, the Ministry will be meeting with the executive and membership of those represented on the steering committee, as well as the private insurers, Bermuda Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce, the Bermuda Employers Council, ABIR, ABIC, our union leaders and others. The purpose is to share the roadmap for achieving universal health coverage and the work

done so far, and most importantly the work still to be done. We know their insight and feedback will be invaluable as we improve health care access, experience and outcomes for all who live here.

Mr. Speaker, let us not lose sight of our personal responsibility for our own health. With or without universal health coverage, the Ministry of Health seeks to empower the community to lead healthy lifestyles. To do so, the Department of Health provides information and tools for individuals to take charge of their health. Lifestyle is the cause of many common chronic diseases—and that means it can also be part of treating and even reversing them. Through the Health Department's HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) Programme, we strongly encourage the people of Bermuda to participate in one or more of the following initiatives:

Complete Health Improvement Programme (CHIP) is one of the world's most scientifically proven, intensive lifestyle intervention solutions designed to help support and facilitate the prevention, treatment and reversal of chronic diseases. [Facilitating] over 12 to 18 sessions in a group setting, CHIP puts you on the fast track to better health by guiding you toward habits that will help you thrive.

Grow Eat Save is a free eight-week gardening initiative where attendees learn the basics of starting their own garden from gardening experts and have the opportunity to work in teams on a plot provided by the Parks Department to implement the skills that they have learned in class. Attendees learn to be sustainable in providing some food to their families during these difficult times.

The HEARTS Initiative is a pilot programme due to be launched in January [2022] to implement evidenced-based hypertension and diabetes protocols to improve the management of cardiovascular health in primary care.

Mr. Speaker, these are only a few examples of the wellness initiatives available through the Department of Health. We fully recognise the fundamental role of prevention in contributing to healthy outcomes and a sustainable health system.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the UHC Steering Committee for their hard work to date. This is the beginning of a multi-year journey with challenges and complexity in front of us. I very much appreciate their contributions, which have put Bermuda on a realistic path to achieving universal health coverage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is that from the Minister of Immigration and Labour.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

PERMANENT RESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE FOR LONG-TERM RESIDENTS, COMMENCEMENT DATE

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Honourable House today to announce that effective December 1, 2021, the amendments to the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 [the Act] which allows for long-term residents to become [Permanent Resident's Certificate](#) holders in Bermuda will be brought into force. The Department of Immigration will begin accepting applications for Permanent Resident's Certificates under the provisions of this legislation effective January 1, 2022.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative amendments are in alignment with the immigration reform strategic priority "to achieve a simplified, fair, and modern immigration legislative framework." To that end, the amendments will

- keep families together who may be separated and create a fair avenue to permanent residency in Bermuda;
- enable long-term residents to fully participate economically;
- support Bermuda in the retention of its residential population; and
- represent a key policy initiative in support of Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 are as follows:

- i. Section 31ZA expands the eligibility criteria for the granting of the Permanent Resident's Certificate to include any person who has been ordinarily resident in Bermuda for 20 years or more;
- ii. Section 31ZB expands the eligibility criteria for the granting of a Permanent Resident's Certificate to include a non-Bermudian parent of a child with Bermudian status who has been ordinarily resident in Bermuda for 15 years or more; and
- iii. Section 31B expands upon current provisions that allow the granting of a Permanent Resident's Certificate to children born to second-generation Permanent Resident's Certificate holders who have been ordinarily resident in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the application fee for a Permanent Resident's Certificate under section 31A of the Act has remained at \$50,000, along with the application fee for the children and spouses of Permanent Resident's Certificate holders under section 31B of the Act, which is \$3,150. The new fees are introduced as follows:

- \$10,000 for a long-term resident who is ordinarily resident for 20-plus years under section 31ZA; and
- \$10,000 for a long-term resident who is a parent of a child who possesses Bermudian status under section 31ZB.

Mr. Speaker; in order to apply for a Permanent Resident's Certificate, individuals must take the following steps:

1. Visit the Department of Immigration website.
2. Complete the Permanent Resident's Certificate application form online.
3. Make an online payment.
4. Submit the application and all required documents in the immigration drop box located on the first floor of the Government Administration Building, with a copy of your online payment confirmation.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that, in alignment with the Government's strategic priority to leverage technology to improve operations, which will lead to greater levels of efficiency, process consistency, and sustainability, the Department of Immigration will transition to a digital application process which will commence next year.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments create a clear, transparent and streamlined process to secure some form of permanency for long-term residents. The policy proposals seek to provide a sustainable solution for long-term residents living in Bermuda to gain a Permanent Resident's Certificate. Although there is still much to be done to reform our immigration system, we are that much closer, as this accomplishment fulfils our platform promise to provide a framework for persons to obtain permanent residency in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for immigration, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all within the Ministry who have helped to make these amendments a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, the next Statement, final Statement this morning is in the name of the Acting Minister for Works and Engineering.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

ST. GEORGE'S MARINA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Good morning, everyone. Good morning to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide this Honourable House with an update on the [St. George's Marina Development Project](#). Mr. Speaker, last week Honourable Members heard mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that the Legislature will consider in due course a strategic plan for the Town of St. George's. [The plan] will include consultation with all relevant stakeholders and will represent the best means by which to raise the fortunes of the Old Town in the wake of the renewal opportunity presented by the new St. Regis Hotel and the St. George's Club that is currently undergoing renovations.

A key component of this revitalisation in the Town of St. George's for the residents and visitors alike will be the development of a new marina on Ordnance Island. This new development is being undertaken by private developers—St George's Marina Development Limited [the Developer] in conjunction with the Corporation of St. George's in a private-public partnership.

With the upgrades to the Ordnance Island dock, Ordnance Island will now have the ability to berth yachts up to the superyacht class, as well as cruise ships. The arrangement will see the Corporation leasing land to the Developer for 21 years less a day, and a sharing of the gross proceeds of the marina revenue.

The new marina will have the following:

- i. improved and designated dock areas for visiting yachts;
- ii. a newly replaced and repaired dock on the south side of Ordnance Island—

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have no idea as to the Ministerial Statement that is being read right now.

An Hon. Member: It is not on the Order Paper.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: It is not on the Order Paper—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: There was an amended Order Paper that was supposed to have gone out this morning.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Well, it is not on the—

The Speaker: Well, let me say we did have all sorts of technical issues here this morning. And that could be part of the reason. But the item should have been included on the Order Paper.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I will take responsibility for its not being there because of our technical problems this morning.

However, the Statement should be up on the Share-Point.

An Hon. Member: It is not.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: It is not. It is not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. I am waiting for the technical. Is it showing up? We just worked it out today, and that was part of the hiccup this morning.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: You should see it there now.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: It is there now. Okay. Thank you.
Continue on, Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker—

- i. improved and designated dock areas for visiting yachts;
- ii. a newly replaced and repaired dock on the south side of Ordnance Island;
- iii. 650 linear feet of visiting dockage for smaller yachts;
- iv. 10 stern-to-berths for superyachts with mooring systems;
- v. marina reception lounge, food & beverage and Internet café;
- vi. duty-free fuel dock; and
- vii. the installation of sewage pumping services.

Mr. Speaker, in order for these infrastructure developments to fully function, the wharf at Ordnance Island constructed many decades ago needs to be replaced. With the assistance of the Department of Works and Engineering, the Corporation of St. George's engaged the services of structural engineers Brunel Ltd., who performed an initial inspection of the wharf in March 2021. Brunel estimated the refurbishment costs at \$2.2 million. However, after a more detailed survey was performed, it was determined that the piles were so deteriorated that they could not be reused as originally hoped, and the replacement cost is estimated now to be \$2.7 million.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this project comes to fruition the Ministry of Public Works has committed \$1.5 million to the refurbishment of the wharf for this fiscal year. Additional funding will be sourced from the Corporation of St. George's, who have the ability to make up the difference using the UNESCO World Heritage Fund, which is to be used to develop and promote the World Heritage Site. With funding secured, the replacement of the wharf is now poised to take place. Mr. Speaker, work on the new wharf is slated to take place in February of 2022 following the

tendering process. The work is estimated to take some four months to complete, with the wharf ready in May of 2022, just in time for our tourism summer season as far as yachts coming in.

In addition to the wharf upgrades, the marina infrastructure undertaken by St. George's Marina Development Limited is currently underway and is slated to be completed in conjunction with the wharf. These works include internal renovations of the former terminal building on Ordnance Island and a welcome centre complete with shower facilities and laundry facilities. The space will be redesigned for an improved décor and to create an outdoor lounge area.

Mr. Speaker, the opening of the St. Regis Hotel in May, the planned re-opening of the St. George's Club in the second quarter of 2022 and the new marina scheduled for completion in May of next year—these developments are expected to provide a further economic boost into our historic town and be of great benefit to all, Bermudians and residents alike.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. That brings us to a close of the Statements this morning.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We now go to the Question Period (it is 11:02) for questions this morning. We have no written questions. So the questions this morning will come from the Statements that have been presented today.

The first was the Statement this morning by the Premier. Premier, you have a question from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: STEPS TAKEN TO LAUNCH THE PMO TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier, for your Statement. I have just a few general questions.

Can the Premier provide the total amount budgeted for the delivery of the 31 items shown on the Bermuda Economic Recovery Plan?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will not be able to provide that figure. Certainly, we know with matters such as Tynes Bay, et cetera, the number of things in there that they would not be able to provide that figure. But what we

can say is that there was \$1 million in this budget year for the support of the project management activities under the line item of the Implementation Plan.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I will move to the second question.

The Speaker: Second question, go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: STEPS TAKEN TO LAUNCH THE PMO TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Of the items highlighted in this report, can the Premier provide an estimate of the number of new jobs that will be created for each of the items and initiatives showcased in this Statement?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I cannot give the Honourable Member that figure. What I can say is that the Economic Recovery Plan itself, in the revisions of the Economic Recovery Plan, the 31 priority items were designed or chosen out of the multitude of items that were proposed from both public sources and also the Economic Advisory Committee in regard to the ones that would have the most impact based upon jobs, also on the ease of implementation and the impact to the Government's budget.

But the view is that a successful implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan, as stated inside of the public plan which was tabled in this House in March and subsequently debated, notes an increased return of GDP growth to ensure better public finances and results in increased jobs in the economy.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary.

So based on what you have just said, do you have a projection for the GDP growth as a result of these initiatives?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That information is in the public domain, and it was included as part of the plan as tabled in this Honourable House of Assembly in March and debated in May.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: For the benefit of the public, can he repeat it?

The Speaker: Say again?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: For the benefit of the public, can he repeat the GDP quote?

The Speaker: By the Standing Orders, once it is in the public domain he is not necessarily required to have to respond.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. My next supplemental question.

The Speaker: Yes. Go to a second question.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: In this Statement the Premier indicated that KPMG had an initial contract valued at \$144,000. What other contracts does the Premier expect to have with KPMG and other Big Four accounting firms?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

As was stated inside of the Statement, following the conclusion of the contractor work, which is being well done by KPMG, I think the Statement points to any further resourcing that will be identified after the first stage will be done. So I cannot necessarily answer the Opposition Leader's question outside of that the Statement speaks to what the next steps will be.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you. That is all I have.

The Speaker: No more questions?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, I am done.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier, you also have a question from the Opposition Whip.
Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: STEPS TAKEN TO LAUNCH THE PMO TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (I was just waiting for the video. There it is.) And I thank the Honourable Premier.

Mr. Speaker, his Statement reads on page 4 or 5 that "the consultants will deliver a Project Management Plan complete with resource requirements, key milestones and timelines, actions and enablers required to progress the 31 initiatives . . ." My question is, Was there a project plan already in use when Government announced the ERP eight months ago?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not entirely certain of what the Honourable Member is trying to get at, Mr. Speak-

er, but I will try to answer the question in the best way possible, as the Statement speaks to it.

There is the fact that there are multiple projects. And prior to even the tabling of this Bill, there were initiatives that were contained inside of the Economic Recovery Plan that were under development as early as July 2020, as stated inside of the Statement, with the work that was done by the Economic Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister of Finance and others. So there was certainly work that was done. There were individual implementation plans that would certainly be happening for individual projects.

What we are speaking about is that, recognising that there are 31 priority initiatives, recognising the level, scale and scope of this, it is an issue from the Project Management Office's perspective of making sure that all of the implementations across all of the various plans are coordinated so the resources can be handled effectively and so we can understand which matters may need additional resources and which matters may need fewer resources to progress.

But I think it is important to note that, as I said inside of the Statement, 9 of the 31 initiatives are substantially complete. So that means that there were implementation plans and work that was taking place prior to this.

But now we recognise that those are things which may have been easier to implement. And there are things which may be more difficult, certainly. And recognising that various sectors of the government are engaged in day-to-day work and activities, but understanding how vital the Economic Recovery Plan is or the successful execution of the Economic Recovery Plan, we want to make sure that we are properly resourced in the areas which are necessary to drive those things forward.

The Speaker: Supplementary question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Honourable Premier.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: So it would be fair to say then that there was no centralised Project Management Plan at that time?

Hon. E. David Burt: If I may, Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely correct. The fact is that individual plans certainly had those things. But we were speaking on a project management, PMO perspective. And if we go and refer back to the public plan which was tabled in the House in March and debated in May, it speaks to all of these particular issues about the individual plan and coming up with a broader framework to make

sure that all of the areas of government can effectively deliver all of the 31 initiatives.

The Speaker: Supplementary? I mean, that was your—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: —Second—

The Speaker: Supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: New question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: New question. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: STEPS TAKEN TO LAUNCH THE PMO TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Mr. Jarion Richardson: As it relates to the Honourable Premier's Statement, on page 2, which reads, "A business plan for a Fisheries Development Centre is being completed under a steering committee" and that "the plan will consider how such a facility will benefit the public." Mr. Speaker, my question is, Given that the ERP on page 18 says that they are currently "completing construction of the Shoreside" fish processing plant. (In other words, it sounds like there is one already in development.) My question is, How much of that shoreside plant has already been constructed at Marginal Wharf?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: None.

The Speaker: Response?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems the Opposition Leader has answered the question of the Opposition Whip.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, your microphone is still on, Opposition Leader, so everyone heard the response.

But as was given in the Statement, Mr. Speaker, the initial plans, as has been previously announced, were for the Shoreside facility to replace the Marginal Wharf. However, what we want to ensure is that the plan is successful. So with consultation taking place (with the persons who are known) as between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation and the Fishermen's Association of Bermuda, it has been determined that it is a better siting for the project to take place in the West End. So that is where the development work is moving. Money has been budgeted for this project to proceed. We want to ensure that this project proceeds.

But what we want to make sure is that it works for the fishermen. We recognise the plan which was

laid out on the Shoreside facility from way back in 2005, had spoken about this. But what we are determined to do is to make this a reality. There is money to be earned from fishing inside of our waters. There is additional stuff of which we can do to boost economic output domestically. And that is what this is intended to do. But we want to make sure that we get it right. And the consultation efforts are ongoing. And we want to complete the consultation effort, identify the new site, which is now going to be in the western part of the Island, so that we can proceed with the construction and implementation of this very important project.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

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

Would the Honourable Premier please inform the Honourable House why—

The Speaker: Do you want to do a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: A supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Why was construction started at Marginal Wharf with the plan incomplete at the time of notifying the public in March?

Hon. E. David Burt: There has been no construction commenced at Marginal Wharf. I thought I made that clear in my previous answer.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Another question? Or are you finished?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: That is it. That is it for me.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP, the Opposition Whip.

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

The Speaker: Premier, that was the last question for you this morning.

We will move on to the next Statement. The next Statement is from the Minister of Finance.

Minister of Finance, you have a question this morning from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, put your question. Opposition Leader, is your microphone on?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I muted it last time, so I turned it off.

The Speaker: Okay. We hear you now. Present your question.

QUESTION 1: HALF-YEAR FISCAL PERFORMANCE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

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

On the second page the Minister indicated that there was a variance of \$25.9 million, a possible variance of \$25.9 million in customs duty. And stamp duty varied by \$7.3 million. Can the Minister give us a breakdown of the variances, i.e., their source—customs duty, like retail, construction—anything that can provide more meat on the source of this additional stamp duty and additional customs duty?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information readily available, but I certainly can undertake to get it. But I would provide just some context.

Honourable Members would know that between April 1 of last year and September 30, we had a full-on lockdown and a suspension of air travel in and out of Bermuda. Between April 1 and September 30 of this year, we did not have a similar occurrence. So the number of people traveling would obviously be higher during this year than last year. And, correspondingly, you would see a potential for more customs revenues.

We will undertake to get specific line items around what goods were brought in by quantum so we can kind of identify and share with the Opposition Leader the details around what is giving rise to the variance.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And the same thing applies to—

The Speaker: Would that be a supplementary question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I asked a double question, for the stamp duties as well.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We can undertake to get that information as well.

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

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

QUESTION 2: HALF-YEAR FISCAL PERFORMANCE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, second question.

Page 4 reads, “This includes \$7.6 million expenditure for the first quarter of the Airport Revenue Guarantee and \$1 million in consultancy costs for Morgan’s Point/Caroline Bay.” Can the Minister identify the consultants who enjoyed this \$1 million in consultancy fees?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I cannot give an exhaustive list from top of mind, but consultants would include the Joint Provisional Liquidators [JPL]; the EY; the Joint Provisional Liquidators’ lawyers, which are Marshall Diel & Myers. They would include the Government’s lawyer, Trott & Duncan. They would include the Queen’s Counsel that have been retained by both the lawyers for the Government and the lawyers for the JPL. They would include Rose Investment Ltd., who are financial advisors to the Government of Bermuda. They would include Alvarez & Marcal, who are also restructuring experts who provide advice to the Government of Bermuda.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. Thank you very much. That is it for me.

The Speaker: That is it? Okay.

Minister, you also have a question from MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: HALF-YEAR FISCAL PERFORMANCE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister of Finance, for your most informative Statement this morning.

I just have one question, and that is in relation to the paragraph at the bottom of page 5 of your Statement where you state that “it is imperative that the budget deficit target for fiscal 2021/22 is not exceeded . . .” and you regard any breach of the deficit target to be a serious issue. You go on to make reference to the \$1 billion of debt that needs to be refinanced.

In view of the serious issue and that re-finance, can the Minister share with us any thoughts on the need or otherwise to raise the debt ceiling in the coming period?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Colleagues will remember in August of last year when I announced the successful completion of the debt transaction last August, that I did mention that we had gone to market to secure funding, one, to refinance existing bonds, but also to raise additional capital to fund the government during the inevitable economic fallout occurring from the pandemic. At that

time I mentioned that we had sought to achieve the financing which provided us with funds to fund the government for two to three years of deficits while the economy recovered.

I do not foresee at this point any need to raise the debt ceiling. In actual fact, the plan that we have laid out anticipates that there will be no need to raise the debt ceiling if we are able to live within our means with respect to the deficit protections that we have set out. The plan calls for a deficit of \$124.7 [million] this year, approximately \$41 million deficit next year, and the following year a slight surplus. So we are operating toward those plans, taking measures to ensure that we set priorities and fund them accordingly so that we can meet our targets.

The Speaker: Another question or supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: A supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Minister, on the \$1 billion debt refinance for the next 24 months, are you able to share with the House how that is progressing at this stage, whether you are optimistic, pessimistic, et cetera?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We are one year out from the first set of maturities. So in actual fact, over the course of the next 24 months there will be four sets of bonds that will be maturing. About \$400 [million] and change in December of next year, \$170 million in December of 2022 and then a further \$300-plus million in early 2023. Then again in late 2023 and then early 2024. So I look at these re-financings in tranches of \$5 million buckets. It is slightly less than \$5 million.

We are a year out. And my current thinking is that we would try to approach the markets next November in advance of the maturities that will happen in December of 2022. And at that point we would seek to refinance the maturity debt in December, as well as the debt that is coming due in January or February of 2023. My team has certainly started to engage underwriters to get their views on what the best strategies are going to be. We are somewhat early in this exercise, but I do not mind being early for this to get the best thinking. But we will be to some degree subject to the interest rate environment that exists at that point in time.

When we accessed the market last August, we were fortunate enough to tap into investor demand, and rates were there at historic lows, probably at the trough of the interest rate cycle. Over the course of the last 15 months rates have been increasing by about 100 basis points. So we will see what happens in the market over the course of the coming

months and be able to respond at a time appropriately inasmuch as we see that rates are going to move far ahead of where we think they should be when we enter the market to refinance next November.

Having said that, all I am saying is that the plan now is for November. But market opportunities may dictate our going a bit sooner. So we are preparing ourselves now for the eventuality that we tap into the market next year.

The Speaker: Thank you.

New question or a second supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No. That is fine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Finance, there are no further questions for you.

Minister of Transport, we have questions for you this morning. The first question this morning is from MP Weeks.

MP Weeks, would you like to put your question?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes. The first question I have for the Minister of Transport is—

The Speaker: I remind you to put your video on, please.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay, we see you now.

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Do you see me now? Okay.

So my question for the Minister of Transport is that inquiring minds want to know, Mr. Minister, with all of this money that has been transferred to Skyport, how does that affect the Ministry of Transport and/or in actual fact the average Bermudian?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: That is a good question. And I think that the best way for me to answer would be by just outlining what the Ministry could have done with those funds. The money that is being transferred to Skyport, or Aecon's New York base escrow account by the Ministry, could have subsidised two flights per

week from Boston, two flights per week from Baltimore. And that would have been able to allow for consistent connectivity for Bermudians needing off Island medical care. We could have subsidised that for the whole year.

We could have then done three-times-per-week service to Miami, which would have helped the Bermuda Postal Service expedite and streamline their delivery of transportation of overseas mail and packages. That could have also been done for the year.

We could have then also subsidised twice-a-week service to and from the Caribbean, which would have put us into a new market with new revenue streams or even new supply chains, which could have helped the young entrepreneur and/or small business owner.

That, right now, what I have just described, would have totalled roughly around \$15 million. So we still have another \$4 million that we could have allocated. And for that additional \$4 million, we could have either purchased 30 new or 30 additional electric buses on top of the 30 that have already been purchased, which would have put all of our transportation, public service transportation issues to rest when it comes to getting children to and from school, getting people to and from work on a timely basis. And also, that would have put us as a world leader for having over 50 per cent of our public transportation system electrified, especially with COP26 being topical.

Now, let's just say we did not want to go with the public buses and we wanted to allocate those funds elsewhere, because the 30 public buses would have cost \$4 million. Let us say we did not put the \$4 million there. We could have actually retrofitted a ferry, which would have allowed for more service, and taken congestion off of our roads, putting it on our water. That would have been \$3 million. And for that last \$1 million, we could have put on the much-needed ferry service to St. George's. That is how it affects the average person.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: No, actually, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is *Wow*. And that was a very in-depth answer. And I am fine with the answer.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

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

The Speaker: Supplemental? Yes, Opposition Leader.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. Can the Minister tell us what he would have done with the \$300 million that

the Government has in receivables that the Government has not collected?

[Pause]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, that is a question—

The Speaker: —I do not know—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: —for the Minister of Finance.

The Speaker: Hold on. I do not know if that question actually relates to his Statement. It may be a valid question, but it has to relate to the Statement that was given this morning.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I am just commenting because he indicated what he would do with the money had the money been not collected. So I am just saying all along that line, he should also think about the monies that were not collected by Government. Had they collected it, they could have done—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He was speaking in reference to monies that were already allocated, already spent by the Ministry for that particular programme.

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

The Speaker: It has to be . . . so the responses, or questions have to tie to that.

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

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?
Yes, MP Jackson.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Given the rundown that the Minister of Transport has just given us, if we had been able to redirect that money from the minimum revenue guarantee, how much of that would have gone into the maintenance of our old airport? Because that would I guess still stand if we had not proceeded. And if we had proceeded with the PLP's \$500 million airport, which would have been substantially more money—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, a point of order—

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: What would we be having—

The Speaker: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Hold on. What is your point of order, Minister?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, it does not appear that the Honourable Member is adhering to the rules around parliamentary questions—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —and germane to the Statement of the Minister. They are talking about things that are not germane. Her question is a rather long for one, and not germane to the Statement of the Minister, which I believe is a primary rule of asking these parliamentary questions on a Ministerial Statement.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Minister. I was listening very closely, as I have done with the former Member who tried to put a question. And I guided him. And this one . . . I am listening very closely, and I am going to let her continue unless she passes a line that I think we need to pull her back on.

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

The Speaker: Are you finished?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, yes.

My supplementary question was that those were all of the lovely things we could have bought with that money. But I would like to know what expenses we would have had? How much would we have been paying for the old airport that we had in maintenance and the rest? And if we had moved ahead with the \$500 million PLP airport, how much—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker!

The Speaker: No, no. Minister! Minister! I indicated to you that I am listening carefully. I understand the rules. Do not interrupt me again, please. Thank you.

Member, your question is on the line of almost speculation as to what it would cost to have run the old facility. What it would have cost to have maintained the old facility, et cetera.

The Minister's Statement gave specifics as to where the dollars could have been spent had those dollars been in their pockets. He knew, not necessarily a speculation, but he knew what it would cost to purchase new buses. He knew what it would cost to do the ferry. He knew what it would cost . . . those

things that he indicated in real numbers that he could say, *If I had that money in my purse still, I could have bought so many buses, I could have repaired so many ferries.*

That is the difference between the speculation of what would have been spent on repairing and up-keeping the old airport, not knowing what repairs may have come up.

That is the issue with the wording of your question at this point. Okay?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realised that there were expenses as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Transport, there are questions for you as well from MP Tyrrell.

MP Tyrrell, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

To the Minister: Without speculating, if my memory serves me right, the last three-quarter MRG payments were something like 3.9, 7.8, 8.4. How does the Air Service Development Strategy impact future MRG payments?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I think the best way to answer that is to just provide a little bit of context before I go into the actual answer.

The Speaker: Well, try and stick as close as you can to the answer and not draw it out. I think the other Minister just now when he responded spoke to us about not trying to keep things lengthy.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Okay. No problem.

Every person who transverse that airport contributes approximately \$100 toward the MRG payment, or the regulated revenues. So when we go to implement phase 2 of the Air Service Development Strategy, that would see Bermuda entering a region that has roughly 44 million individuals who reside there with a market share that we have identified as 135,000 people.

If we were to now be able to get in the best-case scenario, 100 per cent of that market share, that would generate roughly \$13.5 million in additional revenue for the country, taking us outside of that MRG threshold. And even if we were to get a quarter of that, that would be \$3.3 million, which may not take us outside of the threshold for arrivals, but it would reduce

the payment significantly by 75 [per cent] to 80 per cent.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Can the Minister elaborate on that market share that he just mentioned?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, I can.

So when we talk about the market share, that is entering a new market, just like we entered a new market with the phase 1 of the Air Service Development Strategy which took us to, or saw us entering the Azores market with Azores Air, who has seen that to be successful. They will be back in December and then back again next year for the summer.

We are looking to replicate that success, build on that success and enter a market to the south. We are looking to enter the Caribbean market, which could see us making not just travel better for Bermudians, which means that part of the Air Service Development Strategy is serving the underserved; it is also dovetailing into the national tourism strategy, which would see us marketing to more affluent lifestyle-holders, otherwise known as jet-setters, and having them come to Bermuda and become not just a locally driven market, but also a tourism destination.

And in the case of COVID-19 where the airline industry is transitioning from luxury travel back to consistent demand, it is easier for the Government to trace, track and project local demand or local travel trends than it is for us to trace, track and project the new luxury destination.

Therefore, we are mitigating the risk of any further MRG payments while also enhancing Bermuda as a tourism destination and helping to diversify our tourism product.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. Yes, please.

The Speaker: Supplementary. Go ahead, MP Jackson.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

I appreciate the Minister discussing his strategy in two various regions. But I would like to know what efforts are being made to secure routes that locals depend on for medical reasons, to reach out to family, for schooling, et cetera. What is being done to make sure that the routes that locals depend on are going to be secured and that we can generate enough of a minimum revenue guarantee contribution from those groups so that the Bermudian community can travel where they need to go?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I thank the Opposition for that question, because that is exactly what we are doing.

I did not mention Boston, Baltimore, for all these medical services or medical transportation and consistency just to pick two routes out of the air. And I did not also talk about Miami or the Caribbean as just hypotheticals. This is what we are looking at as part of the Air Service Development Strategy phase 2. And although we do not have the \$15 million that would be necessary to be able to do this year-round on a consistent basis, we have a strategy.

We have a plan which we are about to implement over the course of the next year to see just that, to see that we can marry new consistency, new service availability, additional air seat availability with the traditional air seat capacity to make sure that Bermudians get consistent, reliable and sustainable service year-round.

That is what we are doing. That is what we are in the process of, and that is what we should be hearing about more over the course of the next political and fiscal year.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: New question? No further questions?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Nothing more, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, you have questions as well from MP Dunkley.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Honourable Minister's Statement in regard to Skyport payments being made. I would like to ask a question to the Honourable Minister: If the Government was running the airport through COVID-19, in other words we did not have a contract with Aecon, what would be the comparative costs in required funding to carry the airport through COVID-19? Costs, such as debt costs, operating loss through staff payments, all of the general daily operating expenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I thank the Member for that question, because he assumes that there are additional costs.

Airports are run based off of service provided, not service that might be provided. So there would not have been any additional costs, and the cost of running the airport is usually taken out of the operating revenue that is generated by the service provided. So therefore, we would not be having an MRG to pay. We would not have to provide anybody with additional profits. We would have been able to set our budget based off of the service demand. And as service demand drops, so does operational cost.

In this case, under this model, operational costs increased while demand decreased. So, this is why in previous iterations under previous [Governments] (when the now-Government was Opposition) we lobbied against putting the country in this position. If we were not in this position, we would still have enough revenue to be able to do what we need to do without having it as an expense. This deal that we have entered into, which I say time and time again we maintain that we will [fulfil] our contractual obligation, we would not have these obligations and thus we would be better off as a country.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

I appreciate the answer, but I look at it a different way. The Government closed the airport for a period of time last year. Can the Honourable Minister please provide any expenses that would have had to be met when the airport closed? If there were no expenses, Mr. Speaker, it would mean that the staff would not get paid.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: That is exactly correct. You get paid for the time that you work at an airport, not based off salary. So once again, the only additional expense that would have been there would have been

electricity, which would not have resulted in the \$2 million a year that we are paying now under this project agreement.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, the Honourable Member does admit that there are expenses.

Let me ask a second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your second question.

QUESTION 2: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Minister please provide to this Honourable House the passenger volumes in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 at the airport?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: I do not have those specific numbers. I will undertake to bring them back.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to those because in those numbers you will see the answers of why we have expenses for the airport, because passenger volumes dropped off drastically.

So I wait for those answers.

The Speaker: Save that for a question rather than a statement.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I wait for that from the Honourable Minister, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any further questions?

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

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: As the Minister of Transport, can the Minister give any comment to any airports which have actually made money or turned a profit through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, Aecon.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, just, you know, I beg your indulgence.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, that did not sound like the Minister of Transport.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Deputy. Deputy. Deputy. Just slow down a bit, okay? Thank you.

Mr. Dunkley, I paused because I was trying to relate your question to the Statement that was made by the Minister this morning.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Minister's Statement was specific to the cost of the guarantee. And he spoke to the guarantee. He did not speak to the overall [subject] of what airports were doing elsewhere. If we had a broad international [scope] in it in any way, you may have been able to put your question here. But it was specific to the guarantee and the impact that the guarantee is having on the Minister's purse.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, of course I accept your ruling. But I think when you look at the questions and Ministerial Statement in regard to Skyport—

The Speaker: Member, if you accept the Speaker's ruling, that is the end of the question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: And I was just giving you any understanding of where I am coming from, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You can put a new question. You can put a new question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Just giving you the understanding to where I come from; that is all, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put a new question or we will move on to the next questioner who has a question.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: You are the Speaker. We can move on. I am just giving you the background, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: New question. Okay? No questions?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The next Member who indicated they have a question for the . . . sorry.

Opposition Whip, yours was a supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No, Mr. Speaker. It was a new question for the Transport Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, I am moving on to the next person right now.

The next person is MP Jackson.

MP Jackson, do you still want to put the questions you indicated, or are you here for supplementaries that you have got?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I will yield to the next question. I am okay for my supplementaries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.
Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: SKYPORT MINIMUM REVENUE GUARANTEE

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

As it relates to his Statement, the one-page Statement, last paragraph, where he said there is a new Air Service Development Strategy, and he also spoke to it during his responses to my honourable colleagues' questions.

Would the Honourable Minister specify the date when we can expect to see that document either tabled or published?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no specific date right now. We are currently talking through [it], and [we are] in negotiations with other destinations and going through all of the administrative process and doing due diligence. So as it is ready for public consumption, it will be brought in a Ministerial Statement, if not more, to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

The answer provided by the Minister was very specific to current pricing in the air travel market. Given that we do not know when the development strategy will be released, how is the Minister going to ensure that those numbers that he has just released to the public are accurate?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying that the people who are putting this strategy together are subject matter experts who are not only familiar with the local travel trends, they are familiar with global travel trends. And that means they are familiar with the way the projections . . . and being able to do risk assessments and due diligence. That is

how we can ensure that everything that is said can be done within and/or on budget.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. What is the budget?

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: What is the budget for the Air Service Development Strategy?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: That will be discussed during the Budget Debate.

The Speaker: Okay.
Any further question?
No further question? We will move on.
Minister, that is the last question for you on your Statement.
We move on to the next Statement. The next Statement where there are questions indicated is the Statement from the Minister of Immigration.
Minister, you have a question from MP Pearman.

MP, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PERMANENT RESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE FOR LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Honourable Minister, for the Statement you gave to the House this morning.

If you look at page 3 of the written Statement, at the top there are three bullet points. When you read your Statement to the House this morning, you omitted the third bullet point. I was not sure if that was merely just an oversight or if that bullet point should intentionally be struck from your Statement.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the fee associated with the third bullet point is also the fee that was mentioned in the introductory paragraph to that particular portion on page 2 at the bottom, where it says, "spouses of Permanent Resident's Certificate holders under section 31B of the Act . . . is \$3,150."

So children and spouses were already mentioned. That [reference to the] fee was a duplicate [reference]. So the bullet point fee is in alignment with the fee that I had verbally mentioned when I read the Statement.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: So do I understand the Minister that I should just cross out that third bullet point from your Statement, as it is not intended to be there?

Hon. Jason Hayward: The bullet point does not create any additional value. It is still relevant, as that was one of the amendments that was actually made. But there was no additional new fee for that particular section.

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

The Speaker: Second supplementary, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Minister, in any event, the point is that the fee is still \$3,150, correct?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Correct. And I had mentioned that in my Statement.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Grateful, grateful.
Mr. Speaker, second question?

The Speaker: Second question, yes. You used your supplementaries. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PERMANENT RESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE FOR LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Honourable Minister, below that on the same page, you set out a series of steps 1 to 4 that will be taken where someone commences an application for a PRC, or for the certificates, and then they receive it. How long does the Minister anticipate it will take from start to finish? If someone was to apply today, they will have their certificate in what number of months or longer, in your view?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Generally, the complete processing time takes just roughly around six months. We try to aim for a time period closer to that. But what you would see in the paragraph that follows, [it says] we want to move to a digitised process and utilise technology, which will speed up the processing times for applications.

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

The Speaker: No further questions?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Good. Members, that brings us to a close—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I think I am just a little slow on the chat. MP Richardson, question for the Honourable Minister?

The Speaker: Okay. I am going back to the chat. You had sent one in. Okay.
Opposition Whip, put your question.

QUESTION 1: COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PERMANENT RESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE FOR LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, and I thank the Honourable Minister for his Statement.

Honourable Minister, in your Statement you spoke about fees and there being fees as it relates to the type of application, such as \$10,000 for a long-term resident, ordinarily resident for 20-plus years, and also a PRC fee of \$50,000. Would the Honourable Minister please explain whether or not these fees are refundable where an application fails?

Hon. Jason Hayward: That is correct. Mr. Speaker. Where an application has been denied, those fees are refundable.

The Speaker: Supplemental?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Well, Members, that brings us to a close of the Question Period for this morning.
We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Let me just set the clock and get the clock ready.

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

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I would like for this House to send congratulations to former 24th of May Marathon [Derby Classic road race] winner and champion, Mr.

“Ed” Edmond Sherlock, who celebrated his 90th birthday yesterday, November 11.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on a sad note, I would like to send condolences to the family of Associate Pastor of Bethel AME Church, “Danny” Coolidge Durham.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Please associate me, Mr. Burgess.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Certainly.

Some Hon. Members: Please associate me, too.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Certainly, he will be missed by his wife and father, son of Coolidge; his mother, my adopted mother, Julia Durham; sisters, Dr. Shan, [Shangri-La Durham Thompson], Dr. Donna [Durham-Pierre], and Shelby [Durham-Jackson]; and other relatives and friends. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? No other Member wishes to make a contribution under condolences?

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

The Speaker: Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am just getting my video on.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you. And a good morning to colleagues and the Bermuda community.

I would like to ask that a note of condolences be made for the late Ms. Ivy Symons, who was a long-standing senior resident of the Pembroke East constituency, a long-standing supporter of the Progressive Labour Party and certainly was a great admirer and follower of Dame Lois Browne-Evans. She actually is also (which is why it is germane to this House) the mother of Cathy Symons [Brangman], who used to work here at the House previously, Mr. Speaker, doing work generally around the House of Assembly, she and her husband. I thought it important to mention Ms. Symons. She was somebody whom I certainly was supported by and was a supporter of our community in Pembroke East. Certainly her daughter having worked closely with many of us, and her husband, I thought it important that we make note of her passing.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Please associate me.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I note that the MP Michael Weeks, the Honourable Member from constituency 16, would obviously want to be associated, as we

share the neighbourhood. And I know he was also very familiar with Ms. Ivy Symons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Minister Furbert, go right ahead.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to also express my condolences with regard to the family of Danny Durham. Danny Durham was my cousin. We went to school together at Francis Patton School for a period of time. But then he also worked at the Ministry of Works and Engineering. He was a great individual, Mr. Speaker, as Members have already given condolences . . . not condolences but have asked to be associated with the remarks by MP Burgess.

[Mr. Durham] studied hard and recently, as you may be aware, Mr. Speaker, he became the Associate Minister of Bethel, and also he passed some qualifications in regard to the ministry. So again, he will be sadly missed by us in Hamilton Parish and by his family, my cousin Juju Durham, also Shangri and the rest of them, who are great cousins of myself. So I would like to be associated with the remarks coming from the Honourable Member Derrick Burgess.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

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

The Speaker: Is that MP Foggo? Yes, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences out to the Martin family. Just recently, Ms. Martin lost her daughter, a young mother with two children. And whenever someone that young leaves even younger ones behind, it is really a tragedy. I can say that St. David's holds hands with Ms. Martin. The mother is a constituent of Minister Ming. So I will associate her with these remarks. However, her young daughter who did lose her life is a constituent of mine in St. David's. And our hearts go out to the family, and we stand in solidarity with the family as they mourn the loss of this young daughter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you again.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I would like to start my remarks off on a humble note. I would like the House to send condolences to the family of Mr. Jahtino Richardson-Martin. He was a recent road traffic fatality victim, November 3, last week. His parents, Michael and Tonya [Richardson-]Martin are good friends of mine. Mr. Speaker, Jahtino was a bright star and now that he was here, a good footballer for Dandytown Sports Club. He represented Bermuda on our national team. So he had so much potential, Mr. Speaker. And I would take this opportunity at the House to send condolences to his family.

Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note I do not know if congrats have been sent to the college lecturer up at Bermuda College, Mr. Joseph Weeks. I would like the House to send a letter of congrats to him. I know him pretty well, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, you should know him pretty well, MP.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes. He has done well for the country, and he has put us on the map, I think 130-something countries. He and his team, a team contribution, was first. So I would definitely like for the House to send congratulatory remarks to Mr. Joseph Weeks.

An Hon. Member: Associate me, please.

The Speaker: What you left out was to indicate in the area of green technology.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Green technology is his baby. He is always working on food security and the like. So, yes, Mr. Speaker, he is a real techy.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also congratulate—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I will associate with that, Brother Weeks.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education, the Minister of Education would like to be associated.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: You know, I would love to be associated with that, as well.

An Hon. Member: So would I.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: All right.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I would like to associate the whole House as well.

The Speaker: You are eating up the last of your three minutes. Be quick.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. Real quick, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Ms. McKenzie-Kohl Tuckett. She is a student at the University of Bristol Law School, and she is a freshman. And in her first year they had a debate competition, and she is the first-year debate champion.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: She learned those debating skills right in these Chambers, you know. She was a member of our Youth Parliament, a very outstanding member of our Youth Parliament.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, she did. And I do remember that.

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

The Speaker: I think we ought to associate the whole House with that, being that she came through our Youth Parliament.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I will associate the whole House. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: All right. Thank you, MP Weeks.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

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

The Speaker: Minister of Education.

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, I would like to extend a word of condolence to my family on the loss of my grandfather, who recently passed away, Mr. Speaker, while we were on break, Leon Rabain, "Plick" as he was known. Quite a character, well known amongst Works & Engineering electrical staff and the Hamilton Princess mechanical staff, Mr. Speaker.

Also, continuing on that same vein, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family of Raymond William Smith, of North Shore, Devonshire; Alliston Dill of Alexandra Road, Devonshire; and Germaine DeVaughn Trott of Alexander Road, Devonshire, as well. All constituents of mine. I would like for this House to acknowledge their loss and send [their families] words of condolences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Tyrrell, I will take you at this time.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was not sure you were actually hearing me. I did try to get in.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me associate with the remarks to Pastor Danny Durham. Pastor Durham and I were friends even before he joined the cloth. And I was very impressed with him then. And certainly when he did join the pastoral ranks, he certainly got my attention. But what I would like to do also, Mr. Speaker, is ask that this House send condolences to the family of Mr. Wilton Fishenden. Mr. Fishenden actually was a constituent of mine who gave me a lot of time whenever I knocked on his door. He and his wife, Edith Fishenden, were very kind to me. So I know he is going to be missed by certainly her and the rest of the family. So I ask condolences to be sent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert.

Yes, Minister Furbert. You have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with the remarks of condolences for Rev. Danny Durham, a constituent of mine. Also just wanting to let his wife, Paula, know and his son know that they continue to be in my prayers. They are constituents of mine.

Mr. Speaker, I would just also like to give condolences to the family of Diana Ming, mother to Gladnora, Juneann and Michael. Ms. Ming—people may know Ms. Ming. She worked at Temptations Café.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Please associate me, Minister. Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Associate MP Foggo. Thanks.

She was known to work at Temptations, where she made really delicious sandwiches and salads. And I know that her family will miss her greatly.

Mr. Speaker, also sending condolences to the family of another constituent of mine, Ms. Brenda Hollis. Ms. Hollis was known in the Friswell's Hill area actually, but lived in Harlem Heights. She was the wife of David Hollis and mother of Yusef and Jason. She was also known for working in the group homes at the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute. So that family, as well as her family, will also miss Ms. Hollis greatly.

Also sending condolences out to the family of another one of my constituents, Ms. Carol-Ann Burchall, long-time—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Mr. MP Richardson! You need to shut your microphone off.

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

Ms. Carol-Ann Burchall, a long-term employee of Grotto Bay, the wife of Arnold Burchall, living in Harlem Heights. Also, she was the mother to Jeronna and Deanne. Sending our condolences out to that family as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister Furbert.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Yes.

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

The Speaker: Premier, I hear your voice. I do not see you in the camera anywhere.

Hon. E. David Burt: Do you see me now?

The Speaker: I see you. There you go. You have your three minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would certainly wish to be associated with the condolences that were sent and given to the family of—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, your microphone is on.

Go ahead, Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wish to be associated with the condolences that were given to the family of Jahtino Richardson-Martin. Certainly, a tragic loss at this time. I know that those condolences were given by a number of Members, but I want to be associated with that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences to the family of the late Pastor Durham, which were mentioned by a number of Members.

I would also wish to associate myself with the condolences that were given by the Minister of Social Development and Seniors for the family of Brenda Hollis.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable House to send a number of letters of condolences as well, as [since] the last time we met there were a number of persons certainly whom we have lost. Mr. Speaker, first speaking in my constituency to the family of the late Mr. Keenan Butterfield, who was a constituent of mine who passed away, leaving a young family behind. But a gentle giant, as I would call him, an employee of the Department of Works & Engineering, Ministry of Public Works. He certainly, Mr. Speaker, will be missed.

Mr. Speaker, also I would like to ask that a letter of condolences be sent (as you would know, Mr. Speaker, as we attended the burial together) to the family of Ms. Betty Gilbert, from Somerset. A long-time supporter of the Progressive Labour Party, but also a long-time matriarch inside of the Somerset community, she was laid to rest last week, and I would ask that condolences be sent to her family.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, I would ask that the House send condolences to the family of the late Mr. Renalda Bean, who passed away recently. Renalda was a good friend of myself, constituent to the Minister for Transport, and without question was a loss before his time, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that a letter of condolences be sent to his family.

Mr. Speaker, I also ask that a letter of condolences be sent to the family of—

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Premier. We hear an alarm going off. Your three minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay. I will pick up the rest of them next week, Mr. Speaker, because there are a few.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you. No problem.

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

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Richardson?

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes, it is MP Richardson.

The Speaker: Yes. You have your three minutes. If you put your video on, we would appreciate it.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes. Do you see me?

The Speaker: We hear you. We do not see you. Now we see you. Yes, it is on now.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Okay.

Good morning, Mr. Speaker and fellow Members of the House of Assembly.

I just want to express condolences for members in [constituency] number 7. We seem to have been heavily hit by many persons being deceased of late. And it is difficult when we do these things because you want to make sure you do not miss anybody and do not cause any inadvertent offence. But I do want to mention these five persons who were again from number 7 and who have died since the last session in September.

These would include Mr. Withrew Kingsley Beek, Mr. Beek; Donald Wilchester Smith. And both of these are icons in the area. Then there is Alberta Cheyenne Olivia Fubler.

An Hon. Member: Please associate me.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Roslyn Lorraine Raynor; and more recently, very recently actually, last week, was Diana Virgil Ming. As I said, Mr. Speaker. the—

[No audio]

The Speaker: Hold on, please. Somehow we got you muted this time. Go ahead, unmute yourself. Yes.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Good.

These are all senior members of the community, and they have a significant impact well beyond their immediate families because many young people, for example, would have known them as grandparents or *Nana*, as we say in the community. So I just want a shout-out or give condolences to everybody and for all of us to recognise that in this difficult time we all hold them up in prayer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Can MP Richardson repeat those names? Because he was muted when he was providing his [remarks].

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Okay. Sorry.

The Speaker: Yes, part of it did get muted.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Sure.

Mr. Withrew Kingsley Beek, known more favourably as Kingsley Beek; Donald Wilchester Smith; Alberta Cheyenne Olivia Fubler; Roslyn Lorraine Raynor; and Ms. Diana Virgil Ming. Again, all of these were stalwarts of the community, especially [in the] Devil's Hill area because of their longevity and what they meant to the community. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Hayward, do you want your three minutes now?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the condolences that have already been—

The Speaker: We can just remind you to let us see you while you are speaking as well.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the condolences that have been given to the Martin family for the passing of their son, Jahtino Martin. That loss is not just a loss for that particular family, but for an entire community. Certainly, that family has been influential in the Western Stars Sports Club, the club [where] I spent most of my youth delivering on the football pitch.

Mr. Speaker, by extension I want to send condolences to the Darrell family, which is one and the same. That family resides within my constituency in Pembroke Central and is a staple in the Mount Hill area. So certainly, that has been a loss for the entire community. And I would like to be associated with the condolences that have already been sent.

Mr. Speaker, I also want the House to send congratulatory remarks on two significant celebrations this year. Number one, ABIC, the Association of Bermuda International Companies. They celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. It cannot be overestimated or overemphasised the important role that international companies have played in Bermuda's economic success. Certainly, we would want to see continual

success from that particular industry. And congratulatory remarks should be sent to the Chairman, Mr. Patrick Tannock, on the 50th anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda long-term reinsurers are also celebrating 10 years in Bermuda. And that is also significant because that is one of the sectors that we have seen tremendous economic growth from. And as a result, I would like for the House to provide both ABIC and ABIR [Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers] and BILTIR [Bermuda International Long Term Insurers and Reinsurers] congratulatory remarks for their success on their respective anniversaries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Ah, right on time, Minister. Your three minutes just ran out. Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? Any other Member? No other Member?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. Hold on. Let me see if I can get my video up.

The Speaker: Minister Scott.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Can you see me?

The Speaker: Yes. We see you and hear you. Go ahead.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take my three minutes to speak to those who are in my constituency. And also, I declare my interest: A very close friend of mine, Mr. Renalda Bean, who passed away due to complications of COVID-19. So for me, I wanted to just make sure that I took the time out to speak to this and just wanted to share that I know that I am not the only one who has lost somebody, both a family member, an uncle, and a friend, nor am I the only one who has lost a friend to COVID-19. I just wanted to share my sympathies with the House and also make sure that a note was sent to the family of Mr. Bean.

But I also think that there have been others who have been affected by non-COVID-19-related deaths. And I just wanted to let them know, those who are in my constituency and those who are in my different social circles and professional circles, that they are in my thoughts and prayers, and that they are in our thoughts and prayers as we come to grips with this. So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to share that.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Now before we move on, I would just like to associate myself with some of the condolences, particularly those that have been expressed this morning.

I will start with the last one that Mr. Hayward and others spoke on to the Richardson-Martin family on the passing of a young man who tragically lost his life at such a young age. Minister Hayward mentioned the Darrell side of the family, and that is where my connection actually comes in with the family. I know the Darrell side very well, and I and my family express our condolences to them at this time.

I would also like to be associated with the remarks that have been expressed to the Durham family on the passing of Pastor Danny. Much has been said, and all true. He was a very likeable gentleman and had an impact on all who were around him.

We move to the Somerset community. The condolences that were expressed by the Premier in reference to the Gilbert family on the passing of the mother and long-time matron in the Sandys community. We share the sentiments that were expressed by the Premier and the condolences sent to the family.

Also in Somerset, to add a couple of names. We would like to acknowledge the passing of Mr. Weldon Gilbert, the husband of Hattieann. And our condolences go out to Hattieann and her daughter on the passing of Mr. Gilbert. As you know, he was from another well-known Somerset family.

Also to the Scotland family on the passing of Ms. Judy Scotland, wife of John, mother of Makeba, all persons who were very close to me. We share in the loss and just want the family to know that we acknowledge them during this time.

Also Mabel Smith, mother of Leon Smith, Lorin and Nicole Smith. Again, they grew up in the neighbourhood of Sound View, where I resided for many years in my younger years. I know the family well and want to express [my condolences] to the Smith and Phillips families on their loss.

Finally, since I have sat in this chair, for the last three and a half years it has been now, I guess, there is a person who has been very helpful to me when it came to the media and press and speech, presentations and things that we have to do some of from this office, who is no longer with government. And I would just like to express congratulations to her as she moves on to a new phase of her life and acknowledge that we will miss her around here.

And that is Ms. Aderonke Wilson, who has always provided outstanding service to this office, and me particularly in my time that I have been here as Speaker. And I will miss the services that she had provided for us.

With that said, let us now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: We have one Bill to be introduced this morning by the Minister of Labour.
Minister.

FIRST READING

GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021.

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

We now move down the Order Paper, which brings us to the Orders of the Day.

Members, we now have about 10 minutes on the clock before we would have broken for the lunch period. The first item on the Order Paper would be the resumption of the Throne Speech, with the Reply being given by the Opposition.

I am going to ask the House for indulgence that we break now for the lunch period and come back so we can have the Reply (without any interruption) from the Opposition Leader.

Members, are you in favour?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, the House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm, at which time we will start the Orders of the Day with the Reply to the Throne Speech.

Thank you, Members.
See you at two o'clock.

Proceedings suspended at 12:20 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. It is now 2:00 pm, and we will resume the session for today. We are now at the top of the Order of Business for today. For the public's knowledge, we are resuming the Throne Speech, which was read last week to lay out the Government's upcoming legislative session. And we begin today with the Opposition's Reply to the Throne Speech, and then we will open for Members to debate the Throne Speech and Reply.

The Premier moved a motion in the last sitting, so Premier, would you like to put the motion to continue on so that the Opposition Leader can make his presentation?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Actually, you know what, Opposition Leader?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: The Premier moved the motion before we closed last week, remember?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay.

The Speaker: Remember, he moved a motion so that it would lead into the Throne Speech when we came back for business today. My fault, I overlooked that.

Continue with your Reply.

REPLY TO THE 2021 THRONE SPEECH

CREATING A VIBRANT BERMUDA THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

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

Mr. Speaker, before I delve into our response to the Government's Throne Speech, it would be remiss of me, if I first did not address the elephant in the room—the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we are here in November 2021, and who would have thought that we would still be facing this pandemic, a pandemic which in 19 months, has turned this country upside down, inside out and sadly has resulted in over 100 COVID-19-related deaths? It has changed how each one of us goes about our daily lives, and how we manage our community and cultural activities. Just look at the fluid manner in which our schools must now operate. Look at how our work/life balance is distorted. The number of people working from home would have been unheard of pre-COVID-19. Look at telemedicine or at the

new hitch culture. Indeed, there is a new spirit of entrepreneurialism in Bermuda. We have only to look at the exponential growth of online shopping both locally and abroad, and the increase in restaurant take-out orders.

As a result of the pandemic, we now have reduced the size of our family gatherings, be they christenings, graduations, marriages, or funerals. Christmas, Easter, Cup Match and Bermuda Day activities have also been scaled back to adhere to the safety protocols. In fact, look at this scaled-back opening of Parliament. Due to the Government-imposed state of emergency, there has been an increased strain on our health care system, and the added pressures on our social support networks. Unfortunately, we have also had to implement and continue to provide millions of dollars in unemployment benefits, with additional strain on our Financial Assistance programme and our security forces.

To date, there have been four COVID-19 spikes, with the latest one finally coming under control. And, thankfully, we are adjusting our lives accordingly, as we have had to do with other catastrophes.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that we come to terms with COVID-19 and accept that it has changed the way that all Bermudians live their lives. While we have longed to return to normal, we in the Opposition believe that it is time to accept a new paradigm and that we, the people of Bermuda, must come together and rebuild the vibrant, prosperous, and safe community which we were in the habit of taking for granted pre-COVID-19, because let's face it, there were many things that were broken before the onset of the pandemic.

As a country, we need to be cognisant of and recognise that some of the decisions made by this Government and others have failed to provide the needed solutions. If we are going to successfully come out of this crisis, we must learn from our failures. Ed Yong, a journalist for *The Atlantic*, a U.S. magazine, recently said: "[N]ormal led to this. To avert the future pandemics we know are coming, we MUST grapple with all the ways normal failed us. We have to build something better."

The OBA agrees that it is time for us to capitalise on the new opportunities that have presented themselves to rebuild a better Bermuda, both socially and economically.

Mr. Speaker, many may say that I am very optimistic, and that I should take a reality check. My answer to those critics is this: I am confident; in fact I know that we can get through this, because I know that Bermudians are a very resilient and resourceful people. We have worked our way through many challenges and pandemics in the past, and we will do so successfully now and in the future, because that is who we are.

What makes this pandemic more challenging is understanding who the enemy is. As a small nation,

where generations of locals, long-term residents and foreign workers live, we must recognise that public enemy number one is COVID-19 and not one another. We must use our collective wisdom and energy positively, and we must be laser-focused on the fight against the pandemic together. It will take discipline, respect, resourcefulness, creativity and a spirit of community on a level playing field where there is social, economic, and cultural equity for all.

Mr. Speaker, in that vein, let me begin my response to the Government's Throne Speech by congratulating, thanking and showing our appreciation to our frontline workers, the executive team at Bermuda's Department of Health, Bermuda's Chief Medical Officer and his team, our health care workers, our armed forces, our supermarket staff, and medical support staff, our hospital staff, the media, those who care for our seniors, and others whom I may have missed, who have placed themselves at risk by providing outstanding service to our country by managing and mitigating the risks associated with COVID-19.

May I also take this opportunity to commend and congratulate the people of Bermuda for their commitment, patience, diligence and discipline in the continued mitigation and management of Bermuda's COVID-19 pandemic.

The Economy

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, as indicated by BermudaFirst, economic diversification and growth are rarely the result of a government plan. They come from innovative entrepreneurs and visionaries who have an appetite for innovation and risk-taking. In many ways, growth is the product of the Government getting out of the way and facilitating access to on- and off-Island capital and talent. Government should be the enabler; Government should not be the solutions provider.

Considering this, Bermuda needs a creative and workable economic recovery plan, a plan which does not only address infrastructure development and tax concessions. Given the economic malaise faced by the global community and Bermuda, this Government must make economic diversification a real priority beyond the digital and e-commerce industries.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Government has touted much in the Throne Speech about the 31-point Economic Recovery Plan, which will include the creation of new industries such as medical tourism, vertical farming, space communications and other initiatives. In addition, they have engaged KPMG to provide project management and delivery services which will support Bermuda's economic recovery.

I have also been advised that KPMG will be the primary project manager which will oversee and parcel out sections of this major project to the other big three international audit firms that have a pres-

ence on the Island. How much will this cost the people of Bermuda? And can the Government provide details on the tendering process which resulted in KPMG's engagement?

In addition, one questions why this project was not managed within government. The Minister of Finance has a strong team of competent executives. During this time of austerity, what expenses will be trimmed within the Ministry to cover the costs associated with the KPMG engagement?

Anecdotally, it has been my observation that the small army of people performing COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, including those keeping the records straight and those providing security, is probably the largest stimulus recipient group to date. The question is are they civil servants, or are they private contractors?

As one senior executive said to me, this Government should choose three of the top economic recovery initiatives and deliver three well-crafted, world-class initiatives which will position Bermuda to succeed both socially and economically. He went on to say that to try to address 31 initiatives all at once is farcical and should be a non-starter. Another senior executive said that we should address the economic recovery by addressing immigration, inward investment, and restructuring the cost of government.

Mr. Speaker, around the world, people and businesses are facing shortages of everything from coffee to coal. According to the British Broadcasting Company, supply chain disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is mostly to blame, and its effects are being felt in different ways. Mr. Speaker, you may ask, why I am bringing these supply challenge issues to light. It is because we and other countries around the world are all interconnected and interdependent economically because of our global trading systems.

What we sell on the shelves here in Bermuda are sourced from around the world—from the US, China, UK, Thailand, Brazil, and other distant countries. What impacts these countries will ultimately impact us in Bermuda. When their production costs go up, when their shipping costs continue to rise along with energy costs, and the cost of goods and services increases, this will result in the increased cost of goods and inevitably, global inflation.

If current global inflation is hovering at around 4 per cent to 5 per cent, you can rest assured that Bermuda should expect new inflation rates to be between 6 per cent and 7 per cent for the next year or so. What does this mean? Bermudians will have less purchasing power, and experience less value for money, as our real purchasing power will decrease accordingly as the price for a basket of essential goods increases.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's fuel prices have increased at the pumps. A gallon of gas costs approximately \$18 per gallon, compared to other overseas

territories [where it is] priced at between \$4 to \$6 per gallon. This differential must stop. We must review the taxes which are applied to our fuel at the pumps as it has a significant negative impact on Bermuda's cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, a very interesting revelation presented in the Throne Speech is the Government's intention to work with the Island's lending institutions to provide financial loans and mortgage assistance to communities of faith and the third sector entities. It goes on to say that the role that they play has been vital to our community well-being. This must be a revelation for the PLP Government!

Mr. Speaker, most of our churches and charities are strapped for money and financing and can ill afford loans from the private sector. In fact, just a few months ago, this Progressive Labour Party [PLP] Government withdrew 50 per cent of the charitable contribution streams to Bermuda's charities when the recent amendment was made to the Trade Union and [Labour] Relations (Consolidation) Act [2021]. In essence, this is a real example of Government biting the hand which literally feeds our community.

We in the Opposition take a different view. We believe that our third sector partners are doing an excellent job. They continue to fill the voids and gaps left by Government in our communities. Their outreach programmes provide a much-needed safety net for some of our seniors, the vulnerable, the homeless, and some of our young people. These entities must be supported.

International Business

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to international business, the Fitch Ratings agency believes that the tax advantages held by Bermuda's insurers and reinsurers will eventually be reduced because of a recent G20 endorsement of a 15 per cent global minimum tax. Thankfully, the Fitch agency said: "Bermuda's advantageous tax status for the (re)insurance industry will be reduced at the margin with the expected passage of the recent multilateral agreement to establish a 15% global minimum tax rate under Pillar Two of the OECD Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)."

Fitch made it clear that Bermuda will continue to benefit from an established position in the global reinsurance marketplace, with demonstrated underwriting expertise, a strong and efficient regulatory regime, Solvency II equivalence and reciprocal jurisdiction status in the US.

Fitch went on to say, "The overall benefits of maintaining a Bermuda market domicile and operations will likely endure, but the net profitability gap between Bermuda and non-Bermuda incorporated companies is expected to narrow over time."

In essence, while the agency does not foresee taking a near-term rating action against Bermuda

reinsurers because of the agreement, there is some long-term uncertainty. For this reason alone, Bermuda must continue to support international business. We must continue to work with them so that as their businesses flourish, our economy will flourish. In fact, we should work with CEOs in the executive suites as they may be a source of innovative ideas and may be able to suggest policies that will help Bermuda flourish.

Tourism

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I was very startled when in this Throne Speech, the Government indicated that they were leaning towards dismantling the Bermuda Tourism Authority [BTA]. I then reflected on the historic tension and strain between the PLP Government and the BTA. As a former PLP tourism minister once said that they, the Government, were going to, and I quote, "rip out the engine of the BTA." End quote.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition take another view. Bermuda Tourism should be managed and led by tourism professionals who are independent of the government. Moreover, as a country we should salute the work performed by the executive and staff members of the BTA who are performing yeoman services during these very trying times, especially given that the resources made available to them have dramatically declined with the decline in BTA cruise passenger fees, BTA hotel guest fees and vacation rental fees to the tune of approximately \$12 million dollars. This reduction is directly attributed to COVID-19 and its catastrophic impact on Bermuda's tourism revenue, and the reduction in grants made to the Authority in 2020/21.

Mr. Speaker, according to a former BTA CEO, in response to the massive global tourism industry decline, Bermuda experienced 155 cancelled cruise calls, resulting in a loss of 445,469 cruise ship passengers, and \$99.7 million dollars in cruise visitor spending. On the air service side there was a loss of 137,967 in air visitors and a staggering loss of \$206.8 million dollars in air visitor spending. It was only through the prudence of the BTA, and their robust austerity programme that they were able to find their way through this very dark period.

Mr. Speaker, a year later, despite the continued presence of COVID-19, there is now pent-up energy and resources, and the global tourism industry has begun to re-emerge. In November 2021, people are now living with accepted global COVID-19 protocols and are beginning to travel again. We are beginning to see some shoots of vibrancy in Bermuda's tourism industry. But there is much more to be done to revive this important sector for all Bermudians to enjoy.

This revival must begin with an updated National Tourism Plan. We in the Opposition believe that Bermuda's Tourism Plan should be the guiding light

for the BTA and Bermuda tourism going forward. The BTA should look for more social media engagement and an active presence in the digital space. The plan should focus on our visitors to ensure that their experience is authentic and enjoyable as it will always have positive knock-on effects in the growth of hospitality jobs and more fee revenues.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to get tourism back on its feet, the plan must also include increasing our airlift routes and getting our airline carriers and partners sorted out. The Government knows that the loss of our Boston route deeply affects one of our core East Coast markets, and those who rely on the direct flight for overseas medical treatment.

Other key air links have drastically reduced service, including Miami, which for months has been a hit or miss as far as flights are concerned. Not only is Miami a link to the Southeast, but it is also a key link to the Caribbean, and Central and South America. So, the question is: Why are airlines cutting back services to Bermuda when travellers appear to be regaining the confidence to fly again? Let's not forget that our residents also rely on airlift, which has an impact on the hospitality bottom line.

Mr. Speaker, shifting gears, the Government has been very vague on the status of the re-opening of the Fairmont Southampton Hotel. It appears that they still have challenges in finding and securing the required capital for the \$180 million dollar development. In addition, there has been no progress on the Caroline Bay Hotel to bring it to completion and no update on the status of the Bermudiana Beach Resort.

If this Government is committed to the growth of Bermuda's tourism and is focused on letting people know that Bermuda is open for business, tourists cannot come here with their hard-earned dollars only to find a ghost island. The country needs answers; and this Government must provide them. The Fairmont Southampton cannot and must not be another Caroline Bay Hotel which remains devoid of investors.

Gaming

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's gaming challenges must be settled once and for all, to make gaming a reality in Bermuda. The Opposition understands that the Government holds the key to opening this industry, which is vital to the growth of our economy. All they must do is provide the Bermuda Gaming Commission with the same independence and autonomy that the Bermuda Monetary Authority enjoys. With the stroke of a pen the Government can get our local banks' correspondent banks on board to support this industry if the Minister [responsible] for the Gaming Commission is shifted from the Premier to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, it is not lost on the Opposition, nor should it be lost on the people of Bermuda, that

there is a possible conflict of interest when the Premier, who is also the Minister of Tourism and has gaming as an amenity in the tourism portfolio, [is also] responsible for the Ministry that regulates gaming. Why is the Premier and Minister of Tourism also responsible for the Bermuda Gaming Commission? Again, the country and the Opposition want and deserve answers to this very important question.

Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that if the Gaming Commission is shifted to the Minister of Finance, Bermuda should finally be poised to open the gaming industry with cashless gaming using credit cards only at this time.

Immigration and Labour

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, from an economic perspective, Bermuda will not improve without more people paying taxes and consuming services. A person with no long-term residential security, who is treated like a second-class citizen, cannot reasonably be expected to commit to a place that will not commit to them. Treating a person as a second-class citizen hurts our economy, offends this very important group of people, trashes our reputation of hospitality, impugns upon our sense of dignity and respect, and ultimately deprives our people of opportunities.

The current efforts, including the Economic Investment Certificate & Residential Certificate programme implements the simplest, least contentious parts of the Pathways to Status programme. The Government needs to address the hard questions such as what a transparent, equitable route to achieve full Bermuda status looks like. What is the pathway to Bermuda status? It needs to be clear, transparent and equitable.

There could be cross-ministry cooperation between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour who, together, can present mutual benefits for job seekers, corporations who are looking for economic incentives and local resources. And the government can achieve its immigration priorities, making this a win-win for all of the relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, it just makes sense that the Government should make life easier for the industry groups that are keeping the economy afloat. That means as the insurance sector experiences a hard market the Government should increase speed to market by cutting red tape and further incentivise spending in Bermuda and on Bermudians with good corporate citizen benefits, such as, charitable giving closely connected with public policy outcomes.

Strategically, the Government should clarify specific skill sets for each work permit job and then create a specific training path at Bermuda College to generate that specific skill set. If it requires overseas travel or experiences, then build that into the budget of Bermuda College and explain why it is necessary.

The enforcement team at Immigration must also be empowered to bring cases to court quickly and efficiently. Those who contravene the trust we put in them as job creators must be publicly held accountable for their disregard of Bermuda.

The digital industry and e-commerce

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, as indicated last year, the One Bermuda Alliance supports the discussions regarding the digital industry and e-commerce. With Bermuda's legislative, regulatory and telecommunications frameworks and digital communications infrastructure, we stand ready to capitalise on this emerging and growing industry. We expect the provision of robust training and internship programmes, and the creation of new jobs for Bermudians.

From a taxation perspective, the digital sector will also enjoy the traditional tax schemes currently in place in Bermuda, such as company taxes, payroll taxes and land taxes. The Opposition recommends that the Government should consider further examination of a negotiated value added tax for the privilege of companies booking their local and global Internet business earnings from Bermuda. This approach is not new to industry stakeholders. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in the absence of a new rulebook, a number of member governments are planning their own digital service taxes. They are taking this action because of growing public pressure on large multinationals, such as, Google, Facebook (now "Meta"), and Amazon, to pay their share under international tax rules after COVID-19 strained national budgets.

Bermuda's small businesses

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, throughout the past 18 months, a number of small businesses have been absolutely decimated. Local businesses which have been around for decades were dramatically forced to close or downsize. For example, where is the A.S. Cooper's Man shop? Where is the Cake Shop? Where is the Muslim bakery? Where is the Hickory Stick?

Many surviving businesses have had to reconfigure their business model such as Crisson's Jewellers, Calypso, the English Sports Shop, and let us not forget our friends in the Town of St. George's. The Island appeared to be systematically shutting down. What is this Government doing to remedy this? This decline cannot continue. How do we remedy this?

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition firmly believes that businesses must be given the freedom to grow, and that the Government must support their aspirations, not kill them. We recommend that for the time being, corporate taxes must be kept to a minimum.

This Government must do all it can to encourage our entrepreneurs and silent investors to invest in small businesses to increase business productivity.

With respect to customs duties, we recommend implementing a tax deferral scheme for up to one to three months, which will enable retailers and other small businesses to pay their customs duties after their products are sold, and not at the time the products are imported. In addition, there must be true equity when it comes to Bermuda's immigration policies. These policies must be just as user-friendly to local [small] businesses, as they are for our international business sector and partners.

Mr. Speaker, from Somerset to St George's the stories are the same. Small [Bermudian] businesses lament that they must give business away because they cannot get local employees to service their clients. We have heard the repeated refrain, *We want to hire Bermudians, but they do not stay*. The sentiment is prevalent within the landscaping, restaurant, farming, and grocery sectors. In fact, one small businessman approached me and said that he is trying to get one expat guest worker for his workforce of 15 Bermudian employees, but the application keeps getting rejected, while, he said, a chain of convenience stores has all expat workers. He asks, *Where is the equity?*

The other challenge for small businesses is securing financing from our local banks. These small business entrepreneurs feel that they are unacceptable or unwelcome when they go into our banks and ask for support. This must change, and the Government has a role in making this change, despite the support and guarantees provided by the Bermuda Economic Development Agency.

One businessman also shared that he wanted to secure a truck permit to help grow his business, and it took him over eight months to receive his truck permit. What a nightmare! This kind of experience is just not good enough. How can small businesses grow or, for that matter, survive in these circumstances?

To help our economy grow, this Government must cut the bureaucratic red tape when dealing with government agencies for small businesses and other stakeholders. Another small business owner said that because of customs duties, they are not bringing their beauty care products into Bermuda. Instead, they are drop-shipping, which mean that the wholesaler wraps the product using the local business's wrapping and packaging and then ships the orders directly to the client whether they are in Bermuda or overseas.

This innovative idea reduces the operating costs for their businesses, by reducing their customs duty expenses.

Employment

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, the disappointing employment numbers are not unexpected and are consistent with other economic indicators which point to a very bleak future. Essentially, economic suffering will increase in Bermuda until this Government changes its policies, or when Bermudians change this Government.

The job numbers represent what we already know. There is less money flowing in our economy, so there is less money to pay and to be paid. Distressingly, it continues to get worse before it gets better.

As mentioned, the cost of goods is increasing, predominately due to supply chain challenges, shipping, and resource costs from other countries. Local inflation is expected to increase. Working seniors, some of whom have already taken funds out of their pensions, will be forced to quit working due to retirement and redundancies, meaning less money going into health insurance and pensions. This also means less money to be spent on consumer services and purchases. When spiralling unemployment is added to the list, sustainable living will get harder and harder every year.

And even more alarming is the fact that guest workers and locals alike will have to recalculate how long they can afford to live, work, and invest in Bermuda. Can they afford to step aside so that the next generation can take their place on the job ladders? Is the Government trying to staff the economy as it was, rather than as it is and as it will be in the future?

Public Access to Information (PATI)

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, the Public Access to Information Act 2010, grants Bermudians and residents a legal right to access public records. It takes away the discretion of a public officer to decide whether or not to give information to the public. In essence, it allows individuals and organisations who believe that our government institutions have not respected their rights to access records that they have, and holds these agencies to a higher degree of transparency and accountability.

The Information Commission Office [ICO] spearheads PATI requests for information, investigations, and addresses dispute resolutions in an effort to resolve complaints. It also monitors the performance of government agencies under the PATI Act and, on occasion, provides legal advice on investigations related to legislative matters. This makes the entire government more accountable and removes unnecessary secrecy.

Considering the Government's proposed amendment to our Public Access to Information Act, Bermuda must not compromise the authority and invaluable services provided by the Information Commissioner's Office. The Opposition takes the view that

the ICO and its staff are doing an excellent job under trying circumstances. They are professional, independent, and truly apolitical.

The ICO's Information Commissioner, Ms. [Gitanjali] Gutierrez, is tenacious and is doing an excellent job, and her role and responsibility should not be trimmed or diminished for political gain or political expediency. The public have a right to request information from public agencies with the expectation that the Government is committed to being transparent. If the Government is having challenges with their own operational efficiencies that should be examined further.

Flight of our young people

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, another growing concern which we need to address is the challenge faced by our young people who fall between the ages of 20 and 35 years old. Candidly, and unfortunately, they feel that both political parties are a waste of time. They see no future opportunities in Bermuda for their passion-based careers, or any entrepreneurial opportunities for that matter. They find it difficult to find jobs that they love doing and are prepared to sacrifice the stability of nine-to-five jobs to do a job that they are passionate about and love.

Bermuda's young people want an environment that is more progressive and more receptive to their lifestyles and career choices. In fact, they are remedying these dilemmas with one-way tickets to the United Kingdom, the US and Canada to chart a new path forward. They see Bermuda as a place to make some fast money that will give them an economic foundation which will eventually help them to leave and settle in other jurisdictions overseas. This scenario is most prevalent for young people who are interested in careers in the performing arts and fine arts. It also applies to the sporting and coding industries, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, the Government must do more to develop and support the performing arts in Bermuda by promoting local artists and entertainers. In addition, we should also have a national performance centre and an institute for the arts. We in the Opposition would like the Government to also establish more tech fairs to expose our young people to the cutting edge in robotics, coding and animation skills.

The Opposition encourages the Government to develop more festivals so that our artists and entertainers can have year-round opportunities to work, to expand film and TV incentive programmes to attract Bermuda-based production and create visibility for Bermuda and career opportunities and promote public-private partnerships to expand the availability of scholarships for the arts.

To help Bermudians to buy a piece of the rock, the OBA further recommends helping first-time Bermudian home buyers with tax friendly lease-to-buy

opportunities and waive stamp duties on such purchases.

Education

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education the people of this country are expecting more details on what the Government's plans are for next year. We all know that our education system is in transition. And I have to say that the OBA was quite surprised that there was no mention of the new education authority in the Throne Speech. We were also surprised to learn that the first two signature senior schools are the Berkeley Institute and the CedarBridge Academy.

The Throne Speech states that the Berkeley Institute will deliver "Finance and Insurance" and "Health and Social Care" programmes. CedarBridge Academy signature programmes will include "Trades for Building construction and Maintenance" and "STEM" subjects. What will the curriculum for these specialised subjects look like? Where will we source the teaching professionals to teach the new signature curriculum?

Mr. Speaker, while on the subject of the signature senior school curriculum, why has one of our primary industries not been addressed? How are we going to address the tourism, restaurant and retail industries? The Throne Speech does not speak to any of these sectors.

Mr. Speaker, now more than ever there is a dire need to view education through different lenses. We need to look at the destination of our students from a career perspective—*where are they headed?*—instead of just looking at their academic qualifications. We must ensure that all subjects are equally weighted. Vocational subjects are just as important as academic subjects.

In fact, educational snobbery and biases regarding the development of our young people through the academic routes versus the vocational routes has no merit. There must be equal opportunities and improved outcomes to help both students and teachers to realise their full potential. More resources and capital should be directed towards professional development and training so that our teachers can be the best that they can be. We must also elevate the status of our teachers in our school system.

Mr. Speaker, another important issue which needs to be addressed is the publishing of the results of all our external and internal exams in all of our schools, not just our private schools. This is vital because these exams hold everyone accountable. They should be used to judge the performance of our students, our teachers, our principals, our schools and our school systems.

In this COVID-19 era when it comes to external exams there is a lack of certainty on how to assess both teachers and students moving forward. Mr.

Speaker, this is a work in progress. We should also be aware that up until the age of 14 most of our young people are discovering their subject preferences, which will ultimately lead to either an academic or vocational career choice. In the 21st century it is time to develop a curriculum that results in an overarching diploma which has academic, vocational and extra-curricular components and features, a diploma that will prepare our young people for their rightful places in the real world and make them more marketable and employable in the global arena.

In the UK, students were surveyed about their educational needs, and results are similar. They want options. Some want vocational training, others want academic education, and others prefer a hybrid of a vocational and an academic educational path. Having taken these options, these career paths should be supported by a broad-based [general] education with math, science, social skills, and languages.

A sound educational policy should be one where parents, students and counsellors work together. It should provide a roadmap for students who also want to achieve careers in the arts, theatre, sports, trades, supplemental health care, and in the digital arena. More time and effort should also be invested in internships and apprenticeship schemes.

Mr. Speaker, another area in education which needs immediate attention is that of mental health and social and pastoral care. For over 19 months we have been bombarded with so many negative headlines relating to the pandemic. What started out as a trickle of information has escalated into a tsunami of negative headlines, day in and day out, cascading into a mental assault on the psyche of good-natured Bermudians, which has taken its toll, especially on some of our most vulnerable—our young people.

Currently most schools help their students develop physical fitness skills. But little is done to develop mental health skills and critical thinking skills. With COVID-19 and the challenges of our social media universe, more needs to be done to ensure that our students are also prepared and have mental health agility. The same mental health support, skills and agility should be available to our teaching staff as they also face difficult social challenges.

Mr. Speaker, the other crucial issue that this Government has failed to deliver on is the implementation of an independent education authority. Both the One Bermuda Alliance and the BermudaFirst group have promoted this for over five years. The most recent report from BermudaFirst indicated that the realities in today's education "make the case for . . . the creation of an independent authority for public education that is responsible for the performance management of educators and researching and implementing a holistic public education system that is appropriately sized/structured, resulting in a learning environment that facilitates optimum student success."

After five years of the Government kicking the can down the road, the Opposition is asking the Government to provide a status update on this very important initiative.

Physical development and our young people

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's hero and 2020 Olympic Gold medalist, Ms. Flora Duffy, put Bermuda on the map and showed the world and every [young] person in Bermuda, that dreams really can come true through commitment, hard work, discipline, blood sweat and tears, and family support.

However, for far too many, inactivity, obesity, unemployment and conflict are not only global but local challenges as well. In this time of high anxiety over health and finances, it would be easy to forget the importance of sports.

Creating opportunities for our young people to be student athletes should be identified. If we aim for the Olympics but succeed with university scholarships or university attendance through sport, we can be seen to have succeeded. Having a resource to guide young people to gain all the necessary physical training, mental health, nutrition, and sport scholarships is overdue.

Health care

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the focus of health care over the past 19 months has been on the management of the [coronavirus] and now the Delta variant. Globally, governments are tasked with ensuring the safety of their people. The One Bermuda Alliance is today looking beyond the pandemic and asks the Government this question once again: How can they develop a healthy Bermuda without a National Health Plan?

What is the status of Bermuda's National Health Plan? If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we cannot take our eye off the ball and that everyone should have access to basic health care. No one should be impoverished by the cost of coverage. When we read the Throne Speech, it appears that our Government is guiding and leading Bermuda down the path to socialised medicine as we know it in the UK and Canada. That comes with its own unique set of problems and challenges.

As the PLP Government has run Bermuda's health care for most of the past 20 years, it is unconscionable and incredible that there is currently no health care plan. Bermuda deserves better.

Mr. Speaker, as far as hiring digital support and utilising technology, we acknowledge that our health care system needs to be efficient. And in principle we are very supportive of this initiative, even though it may increase the cost of the delivery of health care in the interim. When crafting a new plan, we would like to know what the Government's plan is

to address our shrinking population, which is driving costs up and resulting in increased taxes and slower services.

As a reminder, here is what we know about Bermuda's current health care landscape.

- Over the past 15 years, the cost of health care in Bermuda has increased a whopping 193 per cent.
- Per capita, the cost of health care in Bermuda ranks in the top two countries on the planet.
- Despite the high spending, our current health care does not provide coverage for the entire population. Approximately 10 per cent of the people of Bermuda have no insurance. And due to the economic impact of the pandemic that number is constantly rising, whereas most high-income countries spend far less than we do on health care and do provide cover for everyone.
- The present system has not been able to slow down the rise in costs and it is unaffordable for people with low earnings, which has now been exacerbated by increased unemployment.
- The Standard Health Benefit (SHB) only covers sick or chronically ill people, but does NOT cover preventative medical care.
- Over the next 50 years, Bermuda's senior population is set to grow by 68 per cent.
- With an increase in the ageing population, there is an exponential increase in the demand for personal at-home caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance supports the recommendations made by the BermudaFirst 2019 Reform Report, wherein they state, "Given the clinical partnership we are currently negotiating with Johns Hopkins' Medicine, we should utilise this relationship with Johns Hopkins University to access Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health, a world class expert in advising on the design of health care systems. Ignoring the advice of best-in-class experts, in this instance, would be pure folly and would certainly lead to under-informed choices. Bermuda cannot afford to delay leveraging this and other similar, influential resources."

Given that health care represents the largest expenditure of the Government, getting control of this cost and implementing a sustainable long-term solution is a high priority. We must also ensure that the regulatory oversight is best in class and mirrors the reputation, resources and quality found in the Bermuda Monetary Authority. Bermuda deserves nothing less. Further, regulatory oversight of physician and medical practices and accountability should be the responsibility of the Bermuda Medical Council.

Moreover, the OBA recommends that the PLP Government should

- Develop a National Health Care plan to ensure that every Bermudian has health care

coverage, one that is evidenced-based and managed by independent professionals.

- Each patient would have a Unique Patient Identifier (UPI). This will ensure that everyone has coverage, reduce duplication of services, and drive down the cost of health care for all. It will assist in services being streamlined and produce a true number of those who are uninsured or underinsured to develop solutions to reduce this figure.
- Create a national physical fitness programme to encourage well-being, sound health, exercise, and good personal diet, from primary school throughout life.
- Work with health care providers to ensure that health care reform results in improved population health and more affordable health care.
- Legislate that insurance plans that offer mental health coverage must cover it in the same manner as medical coverage and not discriminate or offer lesser coverage for mental health services.
- Provide additional assistance to those who, for whatever reason, simply cannot afford insurance.

In essence, the focus should be on the provision of patient-centric services, giving the patient more options to be in control of their own health care choices, which are not defined by the practice of socialised medicine.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition believes the protection and support of our vulnerable should go one step further. There should be a combination of qualified legal services, direct support, community interaction, training, and partnerships with the aim of providing practical and emotional support to advance the well-being of our community.

Services such as the Office of the Public Guardian should be embedded in a broader community resource centre to support issues of stress management, domestic violence and ageing at home. Costs and resources could be controlled by working in partnership with the third sector including charities, churches, and social entrepreneurs.

The Opposition further recommends the enhancement of the work on reforming seniors' care, to urgently review the structure, funding, and regulations of the sector. This will ensure sustainability and quality going forward. The review should address workforce issues and care, including acknowledgement of the contributions of unpaid caregivers.

National seniors' strategy

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, seniors are Bermuda's national treasures. Statistics show that while this demographic are living longer, health concerns and the challenges stemming from COVID-19

highlights a need for a national seniors' strategy to help seniors navigate through the ageing process.

An effective strategy must consider the early stages of ageing, helping seniors to retain their independence and retain or improve their health. Seniors have significantly contributed to the economy and yet still find themselves having to make the very difficult choice between food, medicine and housing. We must do more to honour their societal contributions by improving their income security through reducing financially burdensome items such as car licensing fees and land taxes that drain the resources of those on fixed incomes.

In addition, all seniors diagnosed with debilitating diseases like Dementia and Alzheimer's should have access to dedicated caregiver support. The third sector has experienced increased demand for support for seniors with Alzheimer's and Dementia. There must be increased support for family members and caregivers who either dedicate themselves to look after their loved ones afflicted with these diseases, while balancing work and family responsibilities, or are fortunate enough to be able to afford to engage external caregiving support. Family and non-family caregivers are sometimes overlooked as needing support, but the mental and physical toll of taking care of loved ones places a heavy burden on them and also places the primary caregiver at risk for developing physical and mental health problems themselves. More needs to be done to support our caregivers.

Transportation

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is clearly at the precipice of a new era in transportation. This is an opportunity for Bermuda to positively impact climate change and demonstrate how our small land-mass can take a leadership role in transforming transportation into an environmentally efficient beacon for the rest of the world.

Presently, Bermuda's public transportation includes an ageing and inefficient fleet of ferry boats. Our buses and their maintenance have reduced [the bus] services to unreliable at best, and private cars and bikes on our roads are increasingly dangerous and environmentally inefficient. Is it time to consider the privatisation of our local public transportation systems as is done in other jurisdictions? This move will result in economic efficiencies and better value for service to the people of Bermuda.

Having recommended this, we also note that our public transportation services are primarily used by people with limited incomes to go to school, work, shop or visit friends, namely seniors and students. Any increase in ferry and bus fares will have a dramatic impact if these people are residents of either Somerset or St. George's because most of them travel to the city.

Mr. Speaker, legislation must be re-visited to include and enhance support for victims of road traffic accidents. Too many are falling into this category, through no fault of their own, yet receive little to no financial support for expensive, long-term health care expenses. There is community and judicial support for amendments to the Motor Car Insurance (Third Party Risk) Act 1943 to increase compensation to \$125,000 for victims.

Mr. Speaker, careers in aviation continue from its inception 26 years ago, when Bermuda's first Air Traffic Controller, Patricia Peets, welcomed USAir in conjunction with the U.S. Navy handover of the Base lands in 1995. This year, the Bermuda Airport Authority welcomed three new Bermudian Air Traffic Controllers to the team. Following extensive overseas training these young men have returned home to take their rightful place in the air traffic tower, firmly extending the professional aviation history for Bermuda. We offer our congratulations to these young men, their families and support systems.

Updating our taxation system

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, last year's Throne Speech proposed that the Tax Reform Commission of 2018 update its recommendations in light of the new economic realities created by the pandemic.

Our question to this Government is why has this not been delivered? When does the Government intend to re-embody the Tax Reform Commission? Have they refreshed themselves with the 2018 report? And what has been done thus far to implement any of the recommendations?

We submit that there are recommendations found in that report which are fair, equitable, do not place undue burden on the lower paid workers of this country, and do much to effectively broaden the tax base without stifling the economy. But just like the SAGE report, the Fiscal Responsibility Panel's report, and other similar reports, this administration has not put into practice recommendations made by these commissions.

Bermuda's national debt

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the comments recently made by Bermuda's Auditor General about Bermuda's national debt. She underscored her concern by stating that, as in her previous annual reports, the Government continues to make decisions without knowing the combined financial position of all the organisations that make up the Government reporting entity.

She further added that there are no effective, comprehensive long-term plans for reducing the annual and accumulated deficits or the associated debt, the unfunded liabilities of its major pension plans or

the size of taxpayer indebtedness, all of which continue to grow unsustainably.

This continued behaviour must end, and fiscal prudence should and must be implemented if we are going to bring our national \$3.5 billion dollar debt in check. We cannot pass this \$3.5 billion dollar burden on to our young people and generations to come.

Parliamentary reform

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, you will recall in last year's Speech from the Throne the current government indicated that they were examining constitutional reform, which has yet to be defined.

As stated in last year's [Reply], we in the Opposition would like the Government and this Parliament to take further action to ensure that Bermuda's Legislature meets the standards prescribed in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's [Recommended] Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that after much deliberation, a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Governance and Reform presented its final report to Parliament on March [5], 2014, which was unanimously approved by the House at that time. Mr. Speaker, that report recommended that Parliament establish an independent body known as the Management Commission, which would be responsible for the administration of the Legislature.

This initiative will truly support fundamental principles of democracy, with the true separation of powers between the Executive, the Judiciary, and the Legislature. This independent parliamentary commission would also give our Parliament more independence, allowing it to operate more efficiently, reducing the influence and interference by the Executive Branch of government.

You may also recall that the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform also crafted draft legislation which summarised details on the Commission's mandate, its functionality, and its structure. It was submitted to your chambers for review and approval so that it could be presented as a Private Members' Bill. Yet six years later, the legislation has yet to see the light of day, even though the legislation was sanctioned by Parliament in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition take the view that it is time to resurrect and effect this legislation. Let us make this parliamentary Management Commission a reality in this session. It could be our gift and our legacy for generations to come.

National Security and Policing

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, with over 100 COVID-19 related deaths, and the pain experienced by the affected families and friends of the deceased, unfortunately many people in Bermuda have also become desensitised to the increase in

Bermuda's road traffic deaths. Sadly, this state of indifference has had a detrimental effect on our road use and now places many road users at risk. There is an increase in a series of bad habits on our roads, such as road rage, driving under the influence, and other irresponsible driving habits which are totally unacceptable and, in most cases, illegal. Yet these examples continue while the Bermuda Police Service [BPS] constantly faces enforcement and funding challenges.

This dilemma has been going on long enough and must become a priority. We need a more robust police presence on the roads if we are to deter traffic fatalities. In addition, the community is urged to play their part. If members of the community see something, then they must say something.

Gang violence

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr Speaker, unfortunately, we have had reoccurring spates of violence in Bermuda and the sad thing is that our community appears to have become numb to this type of behaviour and has begun to accept this behaviour as new way of life.

We have had eight shooting incidents so far this year. Just last week we had two young people lose their lives as a result of gang violence at a local restaurant in Hamilton. In addition, there were also brawls and youth violence at one of our South Shore tourism properties. This must stop. We must also stop living and believing that we live in a dream land. When it comes to youth and gang violence we must stop saying that this is not who we are and this is not who we want to become. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, this is who we are, and this is who we have become.

It is clear that we are killing our own brothers and sisters, and our leaders must retire from that state of denial because youth violence is here, and it appears that it is here to stay as we are unable to arrest this scourge. As a community we have failed some of these young people. We have failed them in education, we have failed them when it comes to employment and in some cases we have failed to parent them properly.

As parents, we must hold our young people accountable for their behaviour, and not enable or support bad and antisocial behaviour. If our son or daughter comes home with unaccounted amounts of money every week, and they are not working, we must really question those children to see where these funds are coming from. We cannot and must not allow our families to survive on illicit means of income. If we do, those family members are complicit in these nefarious activities, especially if members of the family benefit from these illicit earnings.

Mr. Speaker, gang violence is a reflection of our society and how society has managed its young people. We all must take ownership of this problem

and we all have a role to play in addressing this problem.

Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental responsibilities of any government is the security of its citizens and ensuring a safe environment in which all can thrive. This begins by valuing all our uniformed personnel by providing the best possible conditions of service and physical environment, but it also requires vigorously confronting the causes of crime as well as being tough with the perpetrators of the crime itself.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has disrespected our uniformed services. They have slashed the police budget; they have not provided our firefighters with the necessary equipment, and they have allowed conditions at the prisons to fester. They also failed to provide some frontline workers with the necessary PPE during the COVID-19 lockdown.

We believe in law and order and value our uniformed services. Their performance during the COVID-19 crisis underscored their commitment and diligence and we all owe them our gratitude for their service. They worked above and beyond anything we could have asked.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance recommends that the PLP Government

- fully invest in our uniformed services by ensuring they do not lack for basic needs such as clothing, and equipping them with modern technologies to better ensure safety and crime prevention, including body cameras for police officers, updated fire equipment and emergency ambulances;
- address the serious facilities deficiencies at our prisons to ensure our prison officers work in a safe and healthy environment;
- ensure our uniformed services are fully staffed, so that services are routinely provided, with reduced reliance on overtime pay and the promotion of well-being for those who give service to our Island;
- provide clerical support to our uniformed services so that they are free to concentrate on their important core tasks and not be bogged down by non-critical duties; and
- provide on-call mental health and social workers to support the police in responding to non-criminal calls to provide de-escalation or crisis assistance.

The OBA believes that strong preventative and rehabilitation programmes are important in maintaining safe communities, to provide ongoing support to victims' families, to support and guide at-risk youth and to give offenders a second chance.

Mr. Speaker, tacit support also should be given to the formation of a police authority. After all, we all should support the police with greater community involvement. We also should support the BPS by building more confidence and trust in the organisation.

We commend the BPS for its stance in addressing standards of professional behaviour.

Having said that, though, it is disappointing that the Government has not mentioned the Police Complaints Authority in the Throne Speech. This body is important for public trust and public engagement. Its work should be supported and highlighted.

Mr. Speaker, community policing is critical for the BPS. We should support the Commissioner of Police and the entire Bermuda Police Service in their efforts to enhance community engagement and involvement.

Too often the Bermuda Fire Rescue Services, Corrections and the Royal Bermuda Regiment are the forgotten children of National Security. This must end. We look forward to the Government sitting at the table with them and addressing their outstanding concerns.

The Environment

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, this Government must do more to preserve our garden paradise. We agree with Government that Bermuda is a treasure trove of environmental wealth, and a critical habitat for marine biodiversity. We also support the initiative that Bermuda must become a key player on the global stage of climate risk financing.

As far as the proposed Marine Development Act, we anxiously await further details given that the marine spatial plan has been in process for the past 10 to 15 years. From what I understand, this may be a re-branding initiative as it may have been formerly referred to as Bermuda's Blue Economy.

More must be done to protect, maintain and improve Bermuda's environment and manage our natural resources for sustainable results. We must also do so by managing our contributions to climate change and mitigating climate risks. Bermuda must reduce its dependency on fossil fuels and its dependency on hydrocarbons. We must be more aggressive in defining policies which require the use of renewable energy fuels and low carbon fuels. We believe that this Government should transition the government's small vehicle fleet to electric vehicles within the next five years, and in addition the Government should provide incentives for the creation of energy charging stations throughout Bermuda.

The OBA would modernise and move our bus fleets towards the use of low carbon fuels. We would also continue to build on current policies and programmes to control the proliferation of invasive species, protect our marine resources and to continue to protect our marine parks and marine protected areas. When it comes to food security farming and fishing, we must commit ourselves to securing policies that support the environment and nature. It should also tackle climate change and support a sustainable agricultural industry and fisheries industry.

Our policies and legislation should provide fairness to our farmers and fishermen. As we support other industries, it is time that this Government consider a farmers and fishermen support revolving fund, which could be funded by government with approximately \$1 million dollars to allow our fishermen, live-stock farmers and our vegetable and fruit farmers to enhance their capacity for increased production in a sustainable manner.

While on the topic of our fisheries, I want to invite this Government to meet with our fishermen to discuss the fisheries processing plant that the Government has proposed at Marginal Wharf in St. David's. From my discussions with fishermen and marine scientists around the Island, there is no appetite for such a processing plant. They always raise the issue of the failed Sargasso processing plant, which was at Morgan's Point years ago. In addition, the fishermen also question the logic of having the fish processing plant in St George's when the fishing grounds are primarily around Challenger Bank and Argus Banks, which are at the west and southwest end of the Island.

Moreover, the main fuelling and supply stations are in the west end of the Island, or in Hamilton. They are also interested in examining the benefits of having a fishing co-op.

In closing, as Rahm Emanuel, the former Mayor of Chicago once said, "Never let a crisis go to waste." It [provides the] opportunity to do things [that were not possible to do] before."

Mr. Speaker, clearly, Bermuda is facing one of the most dire and unprecedented periods in its history, a time when all hands are needed on deck to chart the path through this turmoil. Yet this is one of the most abbreviated Throne Speeches from the Government I have ever seen in my 20-plus years in politics. This is incredible.

Mr. Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance's response to the Throne Speech is our rallying call to the Government and the people of Bermuda to collectively shed the debris of the pandemic, rise to our feet as a united people, seize the ample opportunities outlined, and move forward together with confidence.

Mr. Speaker, we must look beyond the pandemic and breathe in a new life of optimism and opportunities for ourselves, our families, our businesses, and our country, if we are to create a vibrant Bermuda that works for everyone.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Opposition Leader.

Members we have heard the Reply to the Throne Speech. This now opens the opportunity for Members to speak to last week's Throne Speech and today's Reply. Would any Member wish to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that Minister Scott?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes sir.

The Speaker: Minister Scott, you have the floor.

DEBATE ON THE 2021 THRONE SPEECH AND REPLY

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to confirm as per Standing Order 19(14)(2) that I have 60 minutes for my contribution as the first speaker.

The Speaker: The first speaker who replies has a full 60 minutes.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, are you going to give me the same 90 minutes as the Opposition Leader took?

The Speaker: The Opposition Leader was presenting the Reply.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: No problem.

The Speaker: You have 60 minutes, sir.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know me well enough to know, and those that listen on a regular basis know me well enough to know that this is the time that I would normally stand to my feet in this Honourable Chamber and start my speech off with an introductory story, which could be anything from aviation and flying behind the power curve, to characters or a plot stemming from the MCU. And for those that are not comic aficionados, MCU stands for the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Whereas, in my last speech I started talking about the Creation story in Genesis [chapter] One, about the creation of an environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Reply to the Government's Throne Speech that the Opposition Leader gave was a long speech from a tall man that made little sense. And so, Mr. Speaker, in these times where we struggle with just finding out what is normal and what normal look like in a world that is in the state of transition, and with a Government that has some serious decisions to make, not to mention that this Government is tasked with putting together a plan or a strategy on how to rebuild our country and move Bermuda beyond the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, needless to say, our community has been rocked and shaken to its core. I am someone who looks at things in a somewhat abstract kind of way, looking at how do I take something verbal or two-dimensional and put it into a three-dimensional space. And so, if we were to look at Ber-

muda now as a construction project, Mr. Speaker (I know you know a little something about construction), I think that Bermuda would be in what we consider the rough-in phase. Now, for those that are not as well versed in construction as yourself and me, Mr. Speaker, the rough-in phase is the stage of a construction project where the various mechanical, electrical and plumbing lines are all brought in after the frame of the building is done. That is when the rough-in phase of construction begins.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but be reminded of Mr. Carl Friedrich Gauss. I am a bit into the Big Bang Theory and sort of intellectual humour kind of circles sometimes, but I am also a great fan of math and all its different properties. And so, for me, personally, I believe that Carl Gauss is probably the greatest mathematician in history, and it is mainly because he realised that ultimate two-dimensional geometries are possible that do not satisfy Euclid's parallel postulates. Now, he went on to describe these areas as non-Euclidean, and for that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that he is arguably the founder and the creator of non-Euclidean geometry.

So, now you might be asking, Mr. Speaker, what does non-Euclidean geometry have to do with architecture, have to do with building back Bermuda's foundation after being rocked by COVID-19 and moving us beyond the pandemic. And I am glad that you asked that question, Mr. Speaker, because I think it would be helpful for me to just explain that Euclidean geometry is the mathematical foundation (pun intended) to your traditional architecture. So, the building that we are in now, the building that everybody listening to this is in now is basically built on the rules and policies or procedures based on the Euclidean geometry. Now, on the other hand, non-Euclidean geometry is the math and the scientific foundation (once again, pun intended) of contemporary architecture.

Now, I come from a family, Mr. Speaker, that has a basis in architecture. I do not know if you remember the old John Swan building on Victoria Street that was designed by my father. I know a little bit about architecture through watching him. And for those who are not as familiar with architecture, contemporary architecture includes all of the latest innovations, the newest trends, as well as thoughtful improvements and changes to the architectural features from prior eras. For example (and I encourage persons to google this while I give my speech), the Gherkin in London. I believe that the Gherkin is the one that looks like a fancy pen top. Or the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, or even, I think, the most iconic form of contemporary architecture is the Sydney Opera House in Sydney, Australia.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Walt Disney told his crew to build the castle first when constructing Disney World, knowing that the vision of the castle in the background and the surrounding area would continue to serve as motivation throughout this project. Mr.

Speaker, this Throne Speech is the Government's castle and rebuilding our country is the primary project.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I included Walt Disney as an example of contemporary architecture just so that the OBA can continue to follow along, as they ran a Mickey Mouse operation from 2012 to 2017. And so, Mr. Speaker, this Government, like every other government around the globe, is tasked with rebuilding the nation, moving beyond the pandemic. And what this Throne Speech outlines, what this Throne Speech highlights is that we *do not*, we *are not* and we *will not* approach this with a traditional mind-set, and that the only way in which we will successfully move Bermuda beyond the pandemic is by a contemporary approach, contemporary meaning incorporating new ways of thinking, new ideas and new technologies.

Mr. Speaker, the opening page of the Throne Speech quotes Dame Mary Douglas. And Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, "If you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organization." Mr. Speaker, I think it bears repeating. *If you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organization.* Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I might be partisan, that this is the second most significant line in the entire Throne Speech, and only second to the line that is found on page 9 that says, "The Ministry of Transport . . . will pursue an air service development [policy] to secure increased airlift . . . and . . . connectivity for Bermuda." Mr. Speaker, air service development is vital to this country.

Mr. Speaker, air service development is a necessity, and you have heard me say before that there is no tourism without transport. And we all know and accept that tourism is a pillar of our economy. Earlier today (without reflecting on the debate because there was no debate on it, it was just asking questions and me providing answers) we discussed the OBA's bad deal for Bermuda that has increased the cost of doing business by a good \$300 [million] to \$400 million, Mr. Speaker. And over the course of 30 years, we will see \$1.3 billion—\$1.3 billion—leave this country and go to an escrow account in New York City, with no plan on how to protect the Bermuda interests, with no plan on seeing how we are going to be able to make this work in the best interest of Bermuda.

They put Skyport in charge of air service development and for the two years that they had that responsibility [it was] unchecked, unchallenged, [and] they lost air service. Therefore, the OBA is responsible for not only increasing our deficit . . . or no, let me not say deficit. Let me scale things back . . . increasing our financial risk, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of \$400 million.

And so, Mr. Speaker, there was no plan to increase air service development, although we have a revenue guarantee that is based on the air service development! And the Opposition which is led by the Opposition Leader who at that time sat in the room

and agreed that this was a good deal to go down and increase our financial risk by \$400 million, not put in place stopgap measures, not find a variation clause to protect Bermudian interests has the audacity, Mr. Speaker, the outright gall to say that this Throne Speech is weak. And as I said, that is why they were in charge of a Mickey Mouse operation.

Mr. Speaker, this Government put in place the country's first air service development strategy, which, Mr. Speaker, dovetails into that of the National Tourism Strategy. The same strategy which the Opposition says needs to be updated was never updated under their remit, was never updated under their time as Government. So, all the things they overlooked as Government we have to now make sure that we clean up.

They increased our financial risk by \$400 million on one deal. I have not gotten to the \$200 million for Morgan's Point yet, Mr. Speaker. And so, speaking about Morgan's Point, if we add the \$400 million with the \$200 million for Morgan's Point, that is over half a billion dollars of financial risk that the OBA Government hung around this PLP Government's . . . or let's just say future Government's necks. And they are supposed to be the ones that are financially prudent. They are supposed to be the ones that run businesses. They are supposed to be the ones that are business savvy and successful. So, Mr. Speaker, it burdens me and I cannot fathom, how these people who run businesses in our community that are currently successful became successful in the first place? Could it be that they created an organisation that stacked the deck in their favour? But I will . . . let's stick a pin in that.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to that quote on the page 1. To me, when we speak about changing the culture, I see that as changing the mind-set, Mr. Speaker. And when you speak about changing the organisation, to me, Mr. Speaker, that talks about changing the environment. So, this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, in my interpretation, as I internalise it, says that first we must change our mind-set. And if we change our mind-set, there is a greater likelihood of us changing our environment. And depending on what we change our mind-set to determines what environment we create for ourselves.

So, if we continue to look at things and people within our community as "us" versus "them," we will only perpetuate an environment in which the status quo . . . remember that status quo that I said to stick a pin in? Let's take that pin out now. So, that is the status quo that will continue. However, if we change our mind-set, or if even just the scope ever so slightly, Mr. Speaker, change our mind-set from us versus them, Black versus white, us versus them, vaccinated versus unvaccinated, to us versus them, the have and the have-nots, to us as Bermudians versus them as the rest of the world, this allows us to create an envi-

ronment where the collective focus is that no Bermudian gets left behind.

We do not want Bermudians to get left behind like all of Flora Duffy's competition in the Olympics. We do not want Bermudians to get left behind like those football teams that will have to go up against Arsenal for the rest of the EPL season. Yes, I am talking about West Ham. Yes, I am talking about Liverpool. But I digress. And, no, we do not want Bermudians getting left behind like they did under the UBP and further put behind under the guidance of the OBA. And the only way that we are going to do this, Mr. Speaker, is if the Government looks at things in a non-Euclidean contemporary approach, meaning using all of the latest innovations, using all of the latest trends in conjunction with thoughtful improvements and changes to our economy through economic diversification, our financial markets, the investment in our infrastructure, expanding the residential population, our social development and the labour market, and to both health care and regulatory reform. And all of this is to help address the shortcomings and inefficiencies that were established and perpetuated under prior eras. And we are doing this, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of future success.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at no time should one confuse future success with that of continued success. And this is what I was starting to get to earlier, because continued success in this context speaks to a person, a family, a company or even an organisation (using the word from the first page in the Throne Speech), that is not only currently successful, but most likely has been successful for generations. And so now, how did they get that way? But before I go into that, let's talk about what future success entails.

Future success in this context speaks to a person, a family, a company that is attempting to break into a market [to] introduce a service, but for whatever reason, . . . it could be that they lack access to capital, because the banks no longer want to loan money to start-ups. The banks are withholding that ability for us to start building a nation of owners. The banks are starting to once again . . . the same banks that relied on the Government to bail them out when they needed help. They had their hand out real quick last year in a hurry. But when the same people that the Government that bailed them out needed help themselves to build up this country, to start infusing and investing once again back into our economy, all of a sudden those revenue streams and those capital streams tend to run dry.

Could it be, Mr. Speaker, that they have a lack of resources or a lack of support? The same support that those who currently and continue to have success had through (how can I say it) the decisions that were made in the yacht clubs and then ratified on Parliament Hill, the same support that they got from a generation when the Government was referred to as the Forty Thieves. Could it be the same support that went

and took from Blacks, took from those that have . . . let me just say, took from the have-nots to give more to the haves, and to ensure that the have-nots work for those that have to make sure that their success is continued. So, now, Mr. Speaker, that is the lack of resources that they need to get their idea off the ground or even take it to a next level. And so, Mr. Speaker, those who achieve success under a status quo would like to enjoy continued success while those who did not have would like to be able to enjoy future success.

Mr. Speaker, how can you identify someone who has continued success? Those that have continued success, meaning they got their success and have been successful for generations would say something like, *This is a weak Throne Speech*. Those that have continued success would sit there and say, *Hmm. We need to look at making sure that businesses, established businesses get more concessions*. They would sit there and look to say that almost everything the PLP is doing is bad for the country, is bad for business. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to start focusing on those that want to enjoy future success, because if you want to change the mind-set, you will have to start by changing the environment.

And on nearly every page of the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, there are examples of ways that this Government plans on either using the latest innovations, meaning leveraging technology that will streamline administrative expenses as found on page 3, new trends in renewable energy technology as found on page 4, and improvements and changes to 11 pieces of legislation from previous eras found on pages 9 and 10.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you hear Members of the Government talk about fighting against or looking at changing the status quo, what we are communicating is our efforts to remove the roadblocks, which if I am being holistically honest, in some cases and sometimes are a result of governmental bureaucracy.

I am going to pause right there, Mr. Speaker, to give a real-world example of governmental bureaucracy and those who are trying to hinder some small business owners from being successful. This Government brought a Bill to the House and it was in the interest of guided tour vehicles. Its interest was in helping us to diversify our tourism product while simultaneously allowing for small business and entrepreneurs to get their foot in the door, to be able to provide a service that is much needed, because we heard the Opposition talk about our tourism product. They talked about the BTA and all the BTA's efforts in which should be going on to make Bermuda more viable to our people and to more people.

But yet, Mr. Speaker, the same Bill that came to the House and was passed through the House with only one question, went to another place and had persons from the Opposition—the same Opposition that agreed to it in this House—disagree to it in the other

House. So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to take this opportunity to go biblical for a minute. In the Good Book it says, *A house divided amongst itself cannot stand*. Hey! Yea, yea, yea! I actually got a little touched there, Mr. Speaker.

So, if the Opposition is divided amongst themselves . . . there are only six of them up here. If the Opposition is divided amongst itself, but yet has the audacity to ridicule and criticise the Government for doing exactly what they agree we should do, that is confusing at best, Mr. Speaker. And I am being polite. But there is something wrong when the Opposition overtly stands in front of progress, overtly stops Bermudians from making money and putting food on their table. And the way they did it, Mr. Speaker, was by an almost . . . they wanted to restrict. And they restricted access to a key piece of our tourism product from someone who is trying to provide a tourism product or a product to our tourists.

So, there is nothing that could be said in that Reply to the Throne Speech that could be taken seriously because actions speak louder than words. The Opposition willingly and knowingly stopped Bermudian small businesses and entrepreneurs from future success. But they have not gone in to try to stop any of their people from having continued success. Therefore, these are some of the roadblocks that we are trying to remove, because we do not want to prevent our people from future success.

Mr. Speaker, I am an eternal optimist. I am the proverbial glass-is-half-full kind of person. If I were to ask a girl out on a date and she responded by saying, *The odds of that happening, Lawrence, are one in a million* . . . Ha! I would take that as her telling me there is a chance! Now, we are smiling. I tend to get that response more often than not. But, hey, I digress.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear political pundits say things like (I have said before and you heard it again today) *what is written in the Throne Speech and what actually happens are two different things*. Or when they describe this Throne Speech as lacklustre, weak or unimpressive, I hear someone who is unable to grasp the concept of non-Euclidean geometry, someone who cannot engage in contemporary thinking, and is most likely relying on the status quo for continued success. But they will be quick to tell you that the 1970s and 1980s were historically Bermuda's best years, instead of saying, *The best is yet to come*.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a little trip down Memory Lane. My Memory Lane is not as long as yours, Mr. Speaker. And nowhere near and is probably one-half or a quarter of that of MP Derrick Burgess. But, Mr. Speaker, going back to the tourism product, I have heard people talk about the fact that, and I heard statisticians look at the numbers, *Oh, air service dropped from 1981 all the way down and it is continuing to drop*. But Mr. Speaker, what they did not talk about is what was going on in not just the aviation industry in the early 1980s, but what was also going

on in our local tourism industry in the early 1980s. Let me start with the aviation industry.

In the early 1980s there was a thing called ETOPS. And ETOPS basically allows for aircraft that have two engines to be able to fly more than 60 minutes away from land or away from a suitable emergency airport. So, if you look back at the 1980s (those that can remember that are listening) you will remember that British Airways was a 747. That has the four engines underneath and had the little double-decker, but it is sort of what Air Force One looks like now. That was what was flying from Britain to Bermuda. Also what happened, you would start your numbering. Eastern and/or Delta were flying the L-1011. That had three engines, one under each wing and one engine on top.

So, as ETOPS comes into play, that meant that the smaller planes could fly further away from land. And that put more of our competition at play. A two-engine aircraft does not have to stop in Bermuda. It does not have to go the long way around. It can make direct flights. So now, that came into play. So, aviation technology expanding allows for us to have more competition. Now they start looking at this new technology, which was then expanded from 60 minutes in 1985 and went to 120 minutes, in 1988 it went to 180 minutes. And that is how you now have this two-engine, twin-engine Boeing 777 come direct from London and land in Bermuda.

So, that what was going on now and Bermuda no longer became a stop, or what they call a tech stop, where they would stop, refuel and go on. Because remember, we had flights that went from London to Bermuda to Jamaica; Jamaica, Bermuda and back to New York. So, we were not making money that way. So, of course, air visitors were declined on that side.

But historically what was happening was that the UBP had changed the mind-set and thus was changing our environment. The UBP changed our mind-set from focusing on tourism and our tourism product and hospitality to focusing on international business. Therefore, those that were in the guest house industry started taking their guest houses out of the tourism block and putting them in the long-term rental block and started fixing them up so that they could get the most return on investment. So now we had less places for tourists to come and stay, but we had more places for the international companies to pick and choose from.

I can almost guarantee you dollars to doughnuts that those that transitioned from tourism and hospitality industry into the international company industry back then, under the UBP, continue to be successful today.

But Mr. Speaker, I go back to what was happening. So, those who will sit there and say that the 1970s and 1980s were historically Bermuda's best years, instead of saying that the best is yet to come.

Mr. Speaker, the worst thing about comments like that is that they indicate a loss of faith, not in the Government, but in your fellow Bermudian. Mr. Speaker, those individuals do not see that services once considered frivolous have become imperative. Ideas once thought to be outside the box are now readily accepted. So Mr. Speaker, if you want to change the mind-set, you will have to start by changing their environment.

I cannot stress this enough, *if you want to change the mind-set, you have to start by changing the environment*. And I heard the Opposition Leader talk about all the businesses that struggled under COVID-19. He almost seemingly took joy in talking about the different businesses that even folded, that were not able to adjust fast enough to the change that COVID-19 brought. Could it be that he took joy in the businesses that he named? Because I do not remember, and my memory is not the best—I did not take my ginkgo biloba today. But I do not remember the Opposition Leader speaking about any Front Street businesses that did not make it through COVID-19. I do not remember the Opposition Leader speaking to any businesses that would have come under the “continued success” category. But I do remember the Opposition Leader talking about small businesses, talking about entrepreneurs, that did not make it, that succumbed to COVID-19.

But Mr. Speaker, I noticed that at no time did the Opposition Leader try to sell seeds of hope, try to show us that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Instead, the Opposition Leader is trying to tell this country *although you see light at the end of the tunnel, it is a train headed in your direction*. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I can say from what I see, being an eternal optimist, that the change in our environment has already begun with the creation of small businesses, like Sargasso, like the success of ER Fisheries, the introduction of the Government’s unemployment benefits, and a historic first with homeporting.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment benefits and homeporting have contributed over \$74 million of economic stimulus to the Island. And Sargasso and ER Fisheries have employed and continue to employ countless Bermudians. As I said before, the change in our environment has already begun. And to think that is the easy part. The hard part of change is the change in our culture or the change in our mind-set. Because, Mr. Speaker, it is easy to be sceptical. It is easy to poke holes in any and every idea. It is easy to be dismissive of new policies and innovations that are put in front of you. How do I know that it is easy? The Opposition is able to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is hard is leadership. The hardest part of leadership is not the slings and arrows that are thrown and hurled your way. What is hard is believing in someone who might not believe in themselves, trying to understand for the life of you

how the greatness you see in someone they themselves are seemingly blind to.

Mr. Speaker, that is what the Premier and this Government are trying to communicate. And that is the point that we made with that quote on the first page, that we believe in you Bermuda; you just have to believe in yourself. And we know that governments of a previous era with their traditional Euclidean approach felt the need to determine what person, what family, what company or organisation was successful and that your role in society was to ensure their success. That is where the status quo mentality originated. So, we grew up in a society, in an environment where our mind-set was almost programmed that if you are not already successful you cannot be successful, you will not be successful, and you should not even try to be successful.

So, we now have to come in and show you that you can be who you want to be. You can do what you want to do, and you can be successful at it and you can change the world and not to listen to those persons who are trying to play down this Throne Speech, because you do not have to go any further than the first page to see that we are telling you *get ready, be prepared, think outside the box, be your own boss, chart your own course*, because the day has come that your Government is creating the environment in which you will have the ability to determine your destiny.

We are levelling the playing field so that all of us have the same opportunity at future success, regardless of whether you are Black or white, vaccinated or unvaccinated, part of the haves or you are part of the have-nots. Just know that when you hear this Government speak about changing the status quo, or that if you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organisation.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that former Premier Alex Scott said it best, *let the haves continue to have, but the have-nots need to have more*. And I guess this will be my closing salvo. I want to start that closing salvo by saying to my fellow Bermudians, I know that the last 12 to 24 months have had you questioning everything that you knew or thought you knew, and that even sometimes that might have even included questioning your own religion. But Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda, I am here to tell you that this setback that we have experienced, your Government—the PLP Government with its 30 MPs and 5 Senators—that you elected, is transforming that setback into a setup for our collective comeback. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker?

I cannot hear you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sorry, yes, I was muted. I am sorry about that.

Thank you. Mr. Dunkley, would you like to . . .

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, sir. It is like that workday commercial . . . you think you have it on, you are putting it on, and it is not going through.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No problem. So, you have the floor now.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. Good afternoon to all colleagues and to the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, first let me just address some of the comments that the Minister just said before me. And unlike the last speaker who loves his stories, and sometimes I do enjoy his stories, I will stick to reality, because, Mr. Speaker, our position at this point in time, in the middle of a pandemic, is very serious.

Unlike the last speaker, Mr. Speaker, I thought the Opposition Leader's Reply to the Throne Speech was comprehensive. I thought it offered some very sound initiatives. I thought it was very fair in its critique of the Government's Throne Speech. I also thought, Mr. Speaker, that it was quite realistic with its initiatives and policies that we would like to see put in place. And I thought, Mr. Speaker, that it offered a solid vision of where we believe we need to go.

So, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I quote what the Honourable Minister said. The Throne Speech is Government's castle. Well, if the Throne Speech is in fact Government's castle, it signifies, in my view, Mr. Speaker, that we have gone back in time, not forward in time as we need to be.

I am going to spend just a couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker, because the Member who just spoke before me seemed to like to focus in on the work of the former Government, or governments not including the PLP, and he referred to the OBA in a somewhat discouraging view by calling it a Mickey Mouse operation. And I ask the Honourable Member to take his blinders off, because I am not going to get into a debate here today on past governments. We need to focus in on the future going forward. But two of the projects that the Honourable Minister keeps referring to over and over again I will continue to push back on.

First off in regard to Skyport, Mr. Speaker, the Government has been very critical of the deal that was put in place and been very critical of the airport. And I have always asked the question: If that is the case, then how would the PLP have built the airport? It is unfair just to criticise with not having a solution of your own when we know it was a fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Government under the PLP back in 2010 to 2013 were certainly looking to build a new airport. And so, if they did not like the option that we came up with, which I believe will stand the test of time over time . . . clearly, it is very unfortunate that we are in the middle of a pandemic which has changed our lives and changed our strategy. But I believe it will stand the test of time. The PLP needs to show how they would

have had a better option, rather than just criticise without offering anything constructive on what else could have taken place.

The Member talked about the first air service strategy. Well, I do not think that is the case. It might be the first air service strategy in his short time in politics. Over the years with my involvement with politics and even, Mr. Speaker, with my activity outside of politics, I am well aware that there have been various air service strategies or we would not have had the progress we had with airlift to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

And the other big bugaboo that the current Government keeps picking on is Morgan's Point, or Caroline Bay, as it is now referred to. And Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is quite young. He is still a junior member, as they sometimes say in politics. And you cannot overlook the fact that that project actually started in his backyard. It started in his backyard, but because of the great concern at the time just before an election, the project was quickly moved up to Morgan's Point and therein started the challenges. Because as we all know, it was moved down to what is called the brownfield site. Difficult decisions have to be made. And so, I am going to leave it there, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to raise those comments over and over and over again to challenge the Government when it is necessary. Obviously, the OBA was not perfect; but we did a lot of good to progress the country moving forward.

And Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader, in his Throne Speech Reply, referred to young people and how they thought about politics. And he quite rightly stated that oftentimes young people (and these are my words adlibbing from the Reply that the Opposition Leader gave) have little time for either political party. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is because they seem to believe that politicians are disconnected from *their* reality. They are disconnected from the issues that face *them*. They are disconnected from understanding what they believe needs to get done for us to move forward. And quite often, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the belief that politicians are disconnected stems from the fact that we continue to try to criticise what somebody might have done in the past without learning from it and moving forward into the future.

So, you know, it is easy for me to sit here today and criticise what the PLP Government has done. But Mr. Speaker, if we continue to look back in time and criticise vehemently what gets done, we are not going to move forward. We are in a very difficult position. The facts show that our unemployment levels are as high as they have been for some time. That is under a PLP Government. That is a fact—the lowest job numbers that we have had for a significant period of time. As the Opposition Leader stated during his Reply to the Throne Speech, Bermudians are emigrating at very high levels. And emigration is certainly growing to all parts of the globe, Mr. Speaker. And it is also a fact that the cost of living is rising at the current time,

Mr. Speaker. Those are the issues that the people want dealt with.

The Opposition Leader also referred to a 193 per cent increase in health care over the past 15 years. You cannot blame the OBA. You cannot blame the OBA for the high cost of health care over the last 15 years when we had only been the Government for four years and the cost of health care decreased or slowed drastically in increasing over that time. You cannot blame the OBA for what has happened in the past three or four years when the PLP has been in charge, because they have actually been in charge.

So, Mr. Speaker, we get to this position this afternoon in debating the Throne Speech, one that is titled from the Government "Social Renewal & Economic Recovery."

Mr. Speaker, I think that there are a couple of critical points in the political calendar that all politicians look keenly at, and most Bermudians also focus in on them because those two critical points can be significant points in a calendar year for the country. Those two critical points would be the Throne Speech, which comes in November, and the Budget Debate, which traditionally happens in February. And so, you look at the Throne Speech as an opportunity to see what Government's legislative agenda will be for the next year. And this Government has talked about social renewal and economic recovery.

But Mr. Speaker, honestly, as the Opposition Leader stated at the very beginning of his Reply to the Throne Speech, he was very surprised to see that there was not more of a conversation around COVID-19 because, in my view, and of many people of Bermuda, COVID-19 is still the predominant factor in our lives today. It still drives us with so many restrictions that we have and it still is that real dark cloud that hangs over our heads that we have to deal with. So, when we look at the Throne Speech by the Government, we have said it is weak for many reasons. And one of those reasons is that it does not deal, as the Opposition Leader said, with the elephant in the room to any real extent.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the Government wants COVID-19 to disappear. Or perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the Government is tired of talking about COVID-19. Or perhaps, Mr. Speaker, they have exhausted their plan to deal with it. But we still need to deal with that challenge because of all the initiatives that the Government might raise. Whether we agree with them and support them or not, if COVID-19 precludes us doing those initiatives, there is no plan. There is no hope. And then there is no confidence for the people of Bermuda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said earlier this week that execution is the key. Of course, Mr. Speaker, it always is the key of something so simple, that if you do not get out of bed in the morning you cannot start a productive day. And I recall debating this economic plan that the Government refers to—the

seven step economic plan that the Government refers to in the Throne Speech. I recall debating it last year. And at the time I said I thought it was weak and I gave my constructive criticism of it. And I said at that time I did not believe it would turn around our current abysmal situation.

It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, in my view, that the economy under the PLP before COVID-19 was poor. And now, after the pandemic has spread its wrath on Bermuda, our economy is stuttering at best. And so, it is important that we continue to focus in on COVID-19 because it is going to drive what we can and what we cannot do. Tourism is virtually non-existent, Mr. Speaker. Hospitality has been brutalised. Retail has continued to struggle, although there were points when we were locked down and people could not travel that retail did see a bit of a rebound. Many small businesses are on life support. Whether it is those who cater to us for food or various products that we want to buy, those small businesses are on life support. Those entrepreneurs, those visionaries that any economy relies on to move forward, are frustrated. They are lacking hope. They are lacking confidence and they are exhausted.

Mr. Speaker, many people are just trying to survive. That is the plain and simple of it. And then, of course, we have emigration. And along the way we have seen unemployment continue to rise. There have been some bright spots on the horizon with the digital nomads, but now that the world has opened up again I would be surprised if those digital nomads continue to stay in Bermuda. So, unemployment has continued to rise and, sadly, with the thousands of cases we have had of COVID-19, we have now had over 100 of our fellow brothers and sisters perish through this time. And Government has come up with policies. Some have been quite effective along the way, but some have made the Opposition ask questions. And some have proven to be inequitable and unfair and not working in the appropriate way. And I mentioned SafeKey. There is a lot of frustration with people in the community in regard to SafeKey.

But thankfully, against that backdrop, Mr. Speaker, the core that has driven the Bermudian economy over the past 15, 20, 25, 30 years or maybe even more—international business—has managed to somewhat weather the pandemic by working from home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, while we must rebuild, and the seven broad categories do offer some opportunity in there, we must also realise that we still have a lot of work to understand where we are going to go from here and how we are going to reconstruct, rebuild, strengthen our foundation in the community.

So, execution is always the way forward. And it was noted today in a Ministerial Statement that Government has hired KPMG to be part of the reconstruction effort with this plan for a significant cost of \$144,000. And we have to be hopeful that this change

will actually come about and our economy will grow. But I have to say, as I said during the economic debate, that the confidence is low that we will see much fruit being put on that because the plan, while the Premier, I believe, said that 9 of the 31 initiatives are ongoing, or have been done at this time, I do not believe many people in Bermuda could actually give you more than a thumbnail sketch of what the plan is. And because we are in such a critical position in Bermuda where we need to move forward, we cannot continue to stay where we are, we all need to understand the plan, we need to buy in to the plan, and we need that plan to work so we all rise together and not fall together, Mr. Speaker. So, the answer to all of these questions going forward is what will define our recovery.

Now, Mr. Speaker, much of the developed world . . . and I think we just have to look around us at our closest trading partners. For example, the United States of America has opened up. Just look at the United States. They are trying to catch up from the shackles that have been put on them from the pandemic. They are trying to catch up. Their supply lines are strained. But economic activity is quite strong in the United States and most of their economic indicators show that. People are out and about. Stadiums are full. People are travelling. Businesses are open, schools are open, transport systems are running. The economic engine of the US is churning and they are trying to overcome the pandemic.

So, in my view, Mr. Speaker, the United States has taken the approach that since much is known about COVID-19, they know how to act. They know how to control it to some extent, and they have effective vaccines. They have decided to open up with precautions. And Mr. Speaker, furthermore, just recently, on November 8, I believe, we have seen that they have opened up with common sense border control, a negative PCR test and proof of vaccination. So, travel and commerce are rebounding in that economy.

Mr. Speaker, I contend, respectfully, that we must do the same thing. It is time for us to move to more normalcy. And Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear, when I say “normalcy,” I am not saying go back to where we came from. I am stating, Mr. Speaker, that humans are born to live. Humans are born to get out and about, not be prisoners of their own home or restrictions. It is time for us as humans to be able to make decisions, to live our lives and be able to be out and about in the community—whether it is business, whether it is pleasure, or whether it is taking care of educational needs, medical needs, whatever it might be.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for us to move back to a more normal way of life as far as people are concerned. Because if it is not now, Mr. Speaker, when is the time? It is a real question because with all of the initiatives one might come up with, if there are still restrictions and we still live in fear over COVID-19,

those initiatives will be severely blunted and will not work.

I say now is the time. And why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Using the examples of our biggest trading partner and our closest neighbour, and probably our best friend, the virus is unlikely to go away now or perhaps even in the next year or two or three, Mr. Speaker. Experts say that, like most viruses, it will keep circulating with cases rising and falling. And we have certainly seen that in our community with spikes and then the ebb and flow.

But Mr. Speaker, the difference between now and 20 months ago, or even a year ago, is that now we have the tools to manage the virus. And if we have those tools to manage the virus and if we believe in those tools, we must use them. The Government has always said that vaccines are effective, and they believe in the vaccine. Well, if we believe it, then we need to open up.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the opportunity for treatments that have proven to be effective to fight the illness of the virus. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, because we got on board with rapid testing quite quickly because of the support of the UK in continuing to give us the means to do that and the equipment to do that, we have the availability for rapid COVID-19 testing. It is important for us to have information that is quick so we can identify what the challenges are. So, Mr. Speaker, I contend we have the tools to manage the virus going forward. And with the fact that it is not going to go away anytime soon, we need to open up.

I am not in any way meaning to downplay the significance of the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, or underestimate the potential significance of the pandemic going forward. But in my view, this virus presents a similar risk to most people as many illnesses or sicknesses we have had in the past where we had a steep learning curve and then we got ahead and we learned about it. And so—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —we must now accept, Mr. Speaker . . . I will take the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening.

Mr. Christopher Famous: The Member needs to do a bit of research. Countries in Europe are about to go back into lockdown due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 is not . . . when you free up, it causes problems. The Member needs to ask himself, does he want our country to go back into lockdown? Because that is what Europe is about to go into.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, I thank the Honourable Member for his point.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, it may just be an update that you may have overlooked, but—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I do not think so, Mr. Speaker. I do not think so.

MR. Speaker, I tend to do a significant amount of research before I even speak. And you know, the Honourable Member has just elucidated a point that I said earlier in my presentation, that we will see the virus spike and the spikes diminish. We know how to handle it now, Mr. Speaker.

Lockdowns proved effective in the beginning because there was great concern about our ability and our capability to handle a surge. And the Bermuda Government has always said, and our health officials have always said, that the biggest concern that they had was the ability for our health care system to deal with that. We have proven through the surges, even in spite of the last one where we were close to that straining point, that we can get it done. If we continue with a trend of keeping restrictions in place, not allowing businesses to have the freedom they need to invest and to potentially have the revenue to cover their expenses, we will see an economy that continues to go downhill, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, if you continue to lockdown economies, once you open up you start the process all over again with the pandemic. You start the process of the pandemic getting a hold in your community and then forcing another lockdown, Mr. Speaker. And so, I followed what has happened in Europe. I am not so sure that we will see lockdowns in Europe. Germany is going through, I believe one of their worst spikes in recent times. Cayman is getting close to opening up their economy and they are facing a pretty bad spike, Mr. Speaker.

So, I understand those facts. I have done a tremendous amount of research. But what I am saying now, Mr. Speaker, [is] if we have gone through all of these restrictions, if we accept that vaccines work, if we accept that we have treatments that work, if we accept that we have rapid testing that helps us identify the challenges that we have, and if we as a people are smarter now because we understand that social distancing works, that wearing masks works, what are we afraid of, Mr. Speaker? We cannot continue to live in fear of the virus.

Now, if we did not know anything, we would still live in fear, Mr. Speaker. This is my view. And so, if the Honourable Member believes we should continue to be locked down as appropriate, that is his view. I respect it; I do not agree with it. And Mr. Speaker, if we were going to be put back in lockdown, there was no better opportunity for the Premier to do it [than] during the last spike. And the Premier said he does not want to go back there again because those positions are somewhat unrecoverable from, Mr. Speaker. People should not have to continue to organise their lives around a fear of COVID-19. It was fine to fear it 18 months ago when we really did not understand what it was or how it impacted us or what we could do to ameliorate our position to a better place, but now we know.

And here, Mr. Speaker, in doing some of my research, I was reading an article [about] an Epidemiologist from Johns Hopkins University, Jennifer Nuzzo, [who] was asked a question about the pandemic. And the question was a simple question: When would the pandemic end? And she replied straightforward “It doesn’t end.” She went on to say, “We just stop caring.” Or we care less about it. Now, this is a professional who understands viruses. She went on to say that for most people it just “fades into the background” of their lives.

And this goes exactly to what I am saying, Mr. Speaker. We have a choice. We have a choice here, now in November of 2021. We open up with sensible precautions or we carry on living in fear of COVID-19. And those are the two simple choices. But they come with different consequences all the way through.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you look at where we are today, we still have the Travel Authorisation Form costing \$75 a pop, and a number of tests to boot. I think we need to consider if that is the most appropriate way to go forward. Simply, I state, Mr. Speaker, that it is very difficult for us to compete with other jurisdictions when we have restrictions that could impact us in tourism, and they could impact us in international business. Businesses can go anywhere in the world now as the world starts to open up. And we have seen travel start to take place, so we have seen people want to go, get out and about, conduct their business, enjoy their time.

So, capital will flow to areas with less stringent regulations. It is just natural. Whether it is the red tape in government or COVID-19 testing, it just naturally will go that way as long as people feel safe. And if that happens, then the economic engine that was somewhat successful in driving Bermuda through the years—international business and tourism—is going to struggle. And then the local economic engine, which is so important, which feeds into that industry, is going to continue to struggle.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe strongly in what I have said. And I believe international business is having a concern about where we stand at the present

time because I have been approached by leaders in that industry who have told me clearly that the restrictions with respect to gatherings and post-arrival testing is now becoming a real challenge. That was the exact wording that one mentioned to me in international business. In the beginning they were able to run their business remotely or in isolation without a great concern. That was because the world was in a very difficult place. We were in lockdown and people were concerned about stuff. But now, there is a need for regular travel and there is a need for those visitor activities that are so important to international business to resume.

A lot of what international business actually does, Mr. Speaker, is be with their client and to offer hospitality to their clients, to be able to move around the world, to host them in Bermuda, to show them what we provide on the Island with our significant infrastructure for the industry in all frames. Now, Mr. Speaker, if they cannot do that, their plans for 2022 and 2023 could include other jurisdictions more than Bermuda.

Just look at the conversation around airlift, Mr. Speaker. The conversation around airlift has been very strong because through the winter months our airlift has been reduced significantly. That impacts not only our tourism industry, but it also impacts the ability of international business to do their job. And why has airlift been reduced? Well, airlift goes where people want to go. So, if planes are not being used in jurisdictions, they will shift to other places, Mr. Speaker. So, now we need to rebuild the faith in the airlines and our industry so not only can our business rebound, but we need to see our tourism rebound.

International business activities, Mr. Speaker, will not resume to any significant extent until some of these requirements are eased to allow them to do what they normally have to do.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: And that is the message, Mr. Speaker, that has been put back to me.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The Member is either misleading the public of Bermuda or is very much not informed.

Mr. Speaker, our biggest competitor in this space is the Cayman Islands. The Cayman Islands are not even allowing people with non-residence into

the Island presently. In London, which is also a competitor, one has to fulfil a negative PCR test before they arrive. And on day two they have to do another test.

So, we do a day 4 and a day 10, that is not prohibitive, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member is painting the picture as if our competitive cities are having people just walk into their countries with no tests—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —and having gatherings with no testing. That is not true, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Honourable Member is overlooking a lot [of what] I said just for his own convenience.

The Speaker: All right. I find it quite . . . the point is that there are restrictions going into other countries. I do not think any of the countries are allowing people in without some type of proper protocol.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, I said that. I said that the United States of America has changed and their protocol at the present time is a negative PCR test and a vaccination.

Cayman is in a different position from us, Mr. Speaker, because they have been locked down for so long they are just trying to open up. And if the Honourable Member is realistic about the business that they do and the business that we do, our international business is much different from theirs, Mr. Speaker, much different from theirs.

So, I am not in any way casting a blind eye to what it must take in other jurisdictions. I certainly appreciate it. I am passing on what members of international business have talked directly to me about. And Mr. Speaker, if Government members want to pooh-pooh that and not pay attention to that, that is up to them. That is up to them. I take my responsibility seriously and I am just passing on the information. And I believe what these people told me has some merit to what they have to say.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, for one minute—

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I am happy to take the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I think the Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, is—

The Speaker: [Put] your video on, too.

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

The Speaker: I hear you clearly. There you go . . . hit it one more time.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Member is misleading the House. I think that when he says “if we want to pooh-pooh” the international business, it is certainly misleading, Mr. Speaker.

It is a well-known fact that our Premier and Finance Minister, in particular, spend a lot of time with our international business partners, Mr. Speaker. And I think that . . . I do not know which international partners the Honourable Member talks to, but I know who we are talking to, Mr. Speaker, and they are very, very happy with the way we have handled the pandemic and our outlook for handling it in the future.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Continue, Member.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I recognise the dress code of the Honourable Member today. I certainly do not support what the Honourable Member has said, Mr. Speaker, because I am getting a different message than the Honourable Member who has left his video on at this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me get back to what I was saying. Not for one minute am I throwing caution to the wind.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: How does it suit you, Honourable Member? I noticed you do not have on your jacket. I just did not have mine on.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: It is more the tie, not the jacket, but I will carry on.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we must use what we know—

The Speaker: Members, Members—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —and open up.

The Speaker: —try to get back to the point where you are supposed to be. Yes, there is a dress code. And we would expect him to respect the dress code, [IN-

AUDIBLE], in Parliament as if we are sitting in our chair, even though we have going virtual.
Continue.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, so not only do I believe—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Just a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Say that again.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Just a point of clarification. I have a jacket on and a turtleneck. The Honourable Member Mr. Dunkley has not got on a jacket.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: A turtleneck is not accepted in Parliament.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. I can fix that in 10 seconds, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, with these interruptions what time does my allocation end?
You are muted, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have a minute and a half left.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Only a minute and half, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, your 30 minutes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Okay, Mr. Speaker, so, as I was saying about international business, the same pertains to tourism. I bumped into the CEO of the Bermuda Tourism [Authority] on Sunday and he was off to two conventions to sell Bermuda. And I got to thinking, what would he say? He would say, *Come to Bermuda, our testing is more onerous than other locations and we lack airlift so it might be hard to get to the Island*. Now, how does that sell the Island, Mr. Speaker? How do we expect tourism to increase when we do not have many levers that we can pull and push to make us successful as we open up?

So, having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to see more initiatives in the Throne Speech to deal with national security, not just the replacement of the existing CCTV system, which has been contained. I would like to see some initiatives to

deal with road safety. Over the past couple of weeks, I have had two road deaths in one stretch of my constituency and two other vehicles go through the fence down onto the rocks. We need to do much better than that because the scourge and the carnage on the road continues.

I would like to see more initiatives to deal with gangs, guns and drugs. And while we are all aghast at what happened at a public place—

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, your 30 minutes have just expired.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is it Minister Hayward?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Correct.

The Speaker: You have your 30 minutes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me time today to weigh in to this debate.

Parliament is an august body. What we say in parliament has meaning and we should take seriously what is actually said in our deliberations. And the last speaker, the Honourable MP Dunkley, raised an interesting question that caused me to ponder. And the question he raised was, What will define our recovery? That is a very serious question to ask. And I believe that the Government has a responsibility to provide an appropriate answer.

And if I can answer the question that was raised by the former Premier, I would answer by saying that the Government's response in this recovery will be a human-centred response. I would answer by saying that the human-centred response means that the laws and the policies that we put in place would be those that ensure that we have the best interests of the Bermudian people at heart. A human-centred response means that this Government will work hard for the working-class people of this country. A human-centred response means that this Government will uphold the social contract that it has with the people of Bermuda when it was elected into Government.

Mr. Speaker, we will work hard to fulfil that obligation through the work done with the initiatives that were featured in the Throne Speech and the elaborate and comprehensive set of initiatives that are outlined in our Economic Recovery Plan. The Government will

ensure that it carries out its mandate to our best ability for the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, this pandemic started out as a health care crisis that has translated into an economic crisis. And this Government has been quick to respond. We worked hard to manage the health care side of things, but equally, we have worked hard to ensure that we support the people of Bermuda. One key element to any country's recovery is to ensure that we provide the necessary social protections to our people.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has spent over \$70 million in unemployment benefits to the people of Bermuda. That is on top of the \$47 million that we provide in grants to Financial Assistance recipients. Despite our fiscal challenges, we have not wavered on ensuring that we provide social protections to the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, we came into Parliament in the last session and we passed a Financial Assistance Bill which extended the time period in which one can receive a financial assistance benefit from five years to seven years. A very small change in legislation, but a very big change for families of Bermuda. Over a hundred families, Mr. Speaker, in the midst of a pandemic would have been removed from social protections. The extension that we put in place, Mr. Speaker, was a lifeline to many and that should not be [underestimated].

Mr. Speaker, hundreds of families would have to grapple with where their next meal was coming from. Hundreds of families would have to grapple with whether or not they would have a roof over their head. Hundreds of families would have to grapple with their basic necessities. However, this Government was determined and wanted to ensure that we look out for the best interests of the people of Bermuda. And we passed a Bill in Parliament which extended their benefits for another 24 months. Additional to that, we passed a piece of legislation which puts personal employment plans in place so we can better equip persons to be financially independent. That is an element of a human-centred recovery. That is what putting people first looks like in practice.

[INAUDIBLE] last year that the level of jobs was contracting in our economy. This was before any meaningful statistics were actually produced. We saw economic contractions in large portions of our industrial sections and we saw where there were large levels of job contractions. The immediate thought was that we need to ensure that we put a strategy in place to get people back to work.

Mr. Speaker, we developed a national re-employment strategy. And in this House I have been providing updates on the number of Bermudians that we have supported through our training programmes. Over 700 Bermudians were provided direct employment support. Over 750 Bermudians have actually found employment through our Job Board referral sys-

tem. And it is imperative that the Government continues to provide support for our people because that is part of our human-centred recovery—working hard for the working-class people of this country, Mr. Speaker.

And when we set out to execute our national re-employment strategy, we realised that more work had to be done to support our young people. And that is why in this year's Throne Speech we see where the Ministry of Labour has been tasked to execute on our youth employment strategy, a strategy that will provide greater opportunities for our young people in this country, a strategy that aims to connect our young people with jobs, and jobs with the young people within Bermuda. It is a strategy that aims to target at-risk youth and provide them with the support that they require so that they can be successful in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, in the future I will roll out the comprehensive strategy as to what we are going to do in support of our youth. But it is not just good enough to say that our youth are disenfranchised. Regardless if our youth are disenfranchised with politics in Bermuda, it is still our responsibility to ensure that we put our best foot forward to ensure that we provide the necessary resources and support that is needed to have our young people as active participants in our economy. We launched our first graduate training programme, Mr. Speaker, this year—a pilot with 15 initial interns. We have put out an appeal for a second award so that we can run it for a second time coming.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said in terms of Government's priorities, and despite our funding challenges we were still able to provide over \$350,000 in scholarships to our young people. We were still able to run our Summer Employment Programme. We have demonstrated to the young people of this country that we care. Education reform is 100 per cent about the young people in this country. It is 100 per cent geared to prepare those individuals and put those individuals on pathways to success. It is a people-[centred response], it is a human-centred response.

Mr. Speaker, if I can shift gears a little bit and talk about immigration. This Government has embarked on a journey of immigration reform, Mr. Speaker, let me make absolutely clear that "immigration reform" is not synonymous with "Bermuda status." I am going to repeat that: Immigration reform is not synonymous to the granting of Bermuda status. Mr. Speaker, I outlined the four strategic priorities of our immigration reform:

1. achieve a simplified, fair, modern immigration legislative framework;
2. leverage technology to improve operations which will lead to greater levels of efficiency, process consistency and sustainability;
3. strengthen enforcement of laws and policies; and
4. support economic growth and the expansion of jobs in Bermuda.

Those are the immigration strategic priorities that we will be embarking on as a Government.

And in line with strategic priority 2, which is to leverage technologies to improve operations which will lead to greater levels of efficiency, process consistency and sustainability, the Ministry of Labour has been tasked in the Throne Speech to ensure that it automates and digitises the processes within the Department of Immigration. As the Minister, I have to admit that we can do better in terms of cutting down our processing time for all types of applications: passports, Bermuda status, permanent resident's applications. We can and we will do a better job, Mr. Speaker.

But as we talk about immigration reform, and as I continuously see in the paper in terms of, *That is what is required, the Government needs to progress immigration reform*, there is never any detail behind it. Because the level of reform that we have done thus far, Mr. Speaker, is also uncomfortable for some in terms of the rate of change and what we have been able to progress in immigration in a very short period of time.

But what we have done, Mr. Speaker, is put a moratorium on a number of job categories. And I constantly hear individuals talking about how that may have crippled some industries, and they have talked to business people and business people say, *We need to do A, B, C or D*. But I wonder if those individuals have talked to the people who have benefited from these policies, the Bermudian people who have benefited and have had increased opportunities by our closing categories.

Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me to read a letter that I received today from an employer?

The Speaker: It is going to be brief, is it?

Hon. Jason Hayward: I will read an excerpt.

"As a follow-up to our last meeting with you in June 2020, we have made a diligent effort to stand by our commitment to train and employ Bermudians. We have hired a total of 47 Bermudians since June 2020, with 27 remaining in our employment to date, bringing our total current staffing of Bermudians to 93."

Mr. Speaker, this is specifically speaking to employment in a closed category. Closing that category removed foreign demand. It forced employers to look inward. Some employers put training programmes in place, and Bermudians have benefited from the policies of this Government, Mr. Speaker. That is using immigration to the advantage of the country.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the only policy that we have progressed as it relates to immigration. I highlighted that the Work from Bermuda Programme has been a relative success. We have estimated over \$23 million of direct impact on our economy from that particular programme. We continuously have persons

who continuously seek to reside in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker. We removed the requirements for an affidavit of domicile for applicants who wanted to obtain Bermudian status.

Mr. Speaker, I read comments in the *Royal Gazette* from a learned Member of this Chamber as it pertains to immigration. The question that was asked was, What reason would we give him to come to reside and do business on our Island? And this is pertaining to investments into Bermuda. [How] can Bermuda be attractive to foreign investments when the OBA are Government, but then somehow turns into being unattractive when the Progressive Labour Party is in Government?

The principles as to why investors want to invest in Bermuda remain constant. We are a relatively safe jurisdiction. We are sophisticated and well regulated. We have a moderate climate. We are the Jewel of the Atlantic. And there are people who have dwelt in Bermuda whom wealthy investors know that they can make money from. And that is the bottom line. And through our economic investment certificate we have seen where there is interest and they have been residing and investing in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, we really have to consider whether or not . . . and this is the debate that has been happening in the UK. We continue with the title "Learned" for Members of our legal fraternity who sit in this Chamber, but sometimes the questions that they pose are not in alignment with the definition of "learned." Mr. Speaker, all of what we have done as a Government has been directly aligned with supporting the people of Bermuda since the onset of the pandemic: keeping families safe; providing social protections; ensuring individuals a place back into the workforce; ensuring the use of immigration as a tool that could actually support our economy, move it forward with the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan that has seven main themes; the diversification of the economy; focusing on leveraging our financial markets; investment in infrastructure; expansion of our residential population; ensuring that we focus on our labour market and social development; ensuring we get health care to a more affordable place; and assuring that we have a sophisticated regulatory framework that will allow for the expansion of business opportunities in this country.

I do not accept that the Throne Speech has [INAUDIBLE]. And that very said speech gives direct reference to the Economic Recovery Plan and is comprehensive. I accept that the Government must execute. But the Government will execute its strategy not because we are trying to appease this businessman or that businessman. We will execute our strategy because we know that it is in the best interest of the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister Hayward.

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

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to.

The Speaker: MP Jackson.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes sir, that is me. Thank you.

The Speaker: MP Jackson, you have your 30 minutes.

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

I welcomed the multitude of information that has been shared through the Throne Speech this year. And yet I have to marvel at the Government's Throne Speech introduction, in that the last couple of years have been a humbling experience for all of us. And having said that, I certainly reflect on how much impact illness and death have had on our community over the past year in particular. I am also very cognisant of the fact that so many of us have been restricted in our movements not only about the Island, but also restrictions from being able to travel overseas.

So this humbling situation that we have had to live through does raise an opportunity. It is as if there is nowhere else we can go at this point except up. So when I look at the possibility of opportunity, I think about that maybe we can begin to reinvent ourselves as a community.

The Government had mentioned in their Throne Speech, and it has resonated with me, that this is about "culture" and "organisation." Those two words just snapped out at me. And I thought about that. Most importantly, "culture" really hit me. I am not getting into culture based on heritage and things like that. I am talking more about how we as a community really think about things, how we approach things and that maybe it is time for us to have a bit of a cultural change.

Mr. Speaker, when I say a cultural change, we have been doing things the same way with the same mind-set for so long. And for so many of us it has not necessarily served us well. So, as much of a hard truth as it may be for all of us, it might be time for us to look a little deeper at what that cultural transformation might actually mean. I have to give it to the Government. They are trying really hard, and they are bringing in at least the conversation about equity and social justice and many of the other very strong and ambitious goals that any country and any community of people would want to build on, Mr. Speaker. But in this situation, my fear is that the Government may be trying to have a culture change in a system that is still not working for us as a people.

There is this hard truth, Mr. Speaker, that our systems may not have been designed for everybody to succeed in, that some of our systems may have

been designed for us to fail. And yet we, as a Government in 2021, are still trying to make a change when the system was never set up for us to change or succeed at. So maybe, maybe, Mr. Speaker, we can begin to recognise that we do have a chance—at this stage we are at *rock bottom*, Mr. Speaker—to begin to look at the systems and begin to wonder if maybe it is not time for us to make that organisational change.

And Government brought in organisation, so they clearly get it. But I am not sure whether we have got the innovation, the imagination and the real sticking power to make those changes. Because we are only going to get one shot at it, Mr. Speaker. If we try to make a change, whether it is a cultural change or whether it is an organisational system change, we are going to have to get it right or we will suffer as a community for the next medium-to-long term.

So if we take both the Government's Throne Speech and the Reply to the Throne Speech and all of the gaps in between—and I am going to be addressing some of those gaps in between, Mr. Speaker—then maybe we can make a change and maybe we can find that ray of light and hope that we all so desperately need right now in order to come out of this ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I am going back to the Government's Throne Speech. They brought up four terms, and it was in like a quote, like the first page. It is the very first page. If you do not mind, I will try to find it and read it again. If not, I will leave it alone. No, it is not coming to me right now.

But under Culture and Organisation, there were these four words that popped out for me: *We were exposed. We have deferred. We have resisted. And we have had denial; we have been denied.* When I go through those . . . (I really would like to find that quote, too. It is not even that late.)

But when I think about those terms that the Government used in their speech, I think about *we are exposed*. Mr. Speaker, from a security, safety, security [standpoint], all of us are exposed! When we get to the level, Mr. Speaker, where you can go basically into a family restaurant and get shot, not one, but two, and the perpetrator rides away, I would say we are exposed. And I believe that security is our biggest threat right now.

When I think about, *Oh, it's been deferred. We are going to look at it another day*, Mr. Speaker, our health care system . . . we have kicked that can down the road for a very long time. And according to the Throne Speech, we are going to be kicking it down the road a little longer. Now, I am not criticising, and I know these things take a long time. I know we have been interrupted by COVID-19 and things have not been good. But it does not change the fact that if we continuously delay [reforming] our health care, then we are going to face some real problems.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know what really hurts me? It is that when I listen to these Throne Speeches,

I find that so many people (and I am not pointing any fingers) are caught up on the money. It is whether we are spending it or we are making it. And health care, in my opinion, is not the place to be talking about the money.

The first priority is the health of our people. If we put as much effort [as we do] thinking about the money, put that kind of effort, even half of the effort into making sure, I mean committed to the health of our people, we would have at least a chance to (1) save some lives for people who are living with chronic diseases who do not have to; and (2) then maybe we will see some of those costs come down naturally. I do not know; I am not an expert when it comes to health. But I am just saying, Mr. Speaker, that no one is much talking about the personal, people, social side of our health care system. And we keep kicking the can down the road.

Mr. Speaker, *resisted*. Economic development, business sustainability we have resisted. There are so many ideas out there, Mr. Speaker, so many ideas. I am not saying that the Government is not working to try to shift the (quote/unquote) “sandbox” to make lots of room for us to play in the sandbox and to learn and to create new things. But, Mr. Speaker, we have got to be more open-minded. We have got to consider that there is an opportunity for some kind of minor cultural shift that will allow our businesses to prosper and survive and increase.

And I am going to give you a good example of when I use the term “economic development,” our resisting it. People under the age of 28, people under the age of 30, maybe even a little older, have a totally different concept about purchasing items online. I am going to use that as an example. So here we are, Mr. Speaker, in our age and wisdom. I tend to veer toward brick-and-mortar. That is what I grew up with. And I do like to go into a store. I like to actually try on the clothes or touch the item, make sure it is the quality I am looking for. But, Mr. Speaker, we are going to pass on. And I am not sure that the future is necessarily going to be about what we understand in our limited capacity at the age of almost 60 years old. And we are going to have to stop resisting. We are going to have to let these children create and come up with things that we do not understand.

But what we are very responsible for is making sure that we have got legislation in place that protects these young people who are exploring different ways of entrepreneurship. We have got to protect them. Because heaven forbid on the Great White Web you are exposing yourself to every single human being and every single risk in the world, every kind of criminal, every kind of fraud, every kind of cybercrime. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to allow the next generation and the next generation after that to explore different ways, because we might not be able to depend on brick-and-mortar for our retail and our entrepreneurship in the future.

So we, as legislators, do have a responsibility. And I do not necessarily know what that legislation looks like, but we do have a responsibility to make sure that we set up a framework that does protect the youth, that does protect the imaginative spirit of the entrepreneur.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am going to get to that last term, *denied*. And education just hurts my heart. It hurts my heart. But for the last two years, I do not care how hard we have all tried we have denied our children their education, Mr. Speaker. It hurts my heart. And it is not our fault—not pointing fingers, not criticising. But we have got a lot of work to do. Mr. Speaker, there was quite a conversation earlier in the year about the preschool programme. Marvellous! Absolutely marvellous. And I appreciate the way that the Minister and the Ministry of Education have sorted that out. I believe that they are on the right track with that.

But there are a couple of suggestions I would like to add, Mr. Speaker. That is that these little three-year-olds and these little four-year-olds who are heading into preschool need our support and they need our help. This is what we call catching a child early. And we have not got a lot of legislation to protect them. So I would like to earmark that. The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to make sure that there is some kind of structure in place.

Now I know. I have worked in the system. I have worked in speech and language for seven–eight years with the Department of Education when speech/language was in Education. Now it is in Health, and I want to speak to that in a minute. But my point, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to make sure that these children are somehow assessed. Even if it is that there is someone there who understands and can observe these little three-year-olds and make some kind of beginning foundation of where these children are and we have an opportunity to then build on their learning milestones from there. So I would like to implore Government, the Ministry of Education, et cetera, to consider assessments.

Now, three-year-olds, that is a whole new bucket of worms, right? We usually start with five-year-olds. Five-year-olds you pretty much have got your man at that point. But with the three-year-olds there are certain complexities and still some nimbleness about the child, some innocence. And that brings me to my point. Again, it is not a criticism, but maybe a suggestion. I have not heard anyone talk about the Child Development Project throughout this entire educational reform. Now, I may have missed something, and I will put my hand up to that. But, Mr. Speaker, we have got to be able to partner with people who have an in-depth knowledge about little people.

And the Child Development Project and now the Child Development Programme has continuously provided service to this community. And somehow they have been *deferred*, *resisted*, maybe even *de-*

nied. I do not know what the situation is. But it is almost imperative that we partner with the Ministry of Health that has the Child Development Programme, the Ministry of Education that has the preschool infrastructure, and we take a look at any other services. And I think that I want to say—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Private preschools.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I cannot remember what the other area was. And I want to say—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of clarification, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes? What was that?

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: A point of clarification.

I just want the Member to know that the Child Development Programme falls under the Ministry of Education, and it is tightly intertwined with Early Childhood Development, which comes under Ms. Sherry Bucci. And there is a very, very much aligned programme between them and our children and to our preschool. I just wanted to clarify for her.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

Member, the Minister was just giving you a little clarification on one of your points made earlier just to clarify that that programme is still under the Ministry of Education. Continue.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you very much. That absolutely works. Thank you. Much appreciated.

But the third entity that was added to that was Financial Assistance, working with the parents who are qualified for the allowance which then makes their three-year-old eligible for preschool. It would be nice—and again maybe the Minister can shed some light on this. Whether it is the parent of the three-year-old or the parent of the 17-year-old, it would be interesting to understand what possibly could be put into place to get the parent more involved, get the parent a little more accountable for making sure even the basics out of the Children Act, of making sure the child gets to school every day or—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, if the Member would accept a point of clarification?

The Speaker: Another point of clarification? Go ahead, Minister.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes.

Through the Child Development Programme, there are parental classes that are put in place; however, they are voluntary. But they do take place at that level because it is critically important that our children receive that type of support that our parents learned when their children were newborn. So it is something that stays with them throughout.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Member, do you appreciate the point of clarification?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes. Absolutely. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: With that I am going to move on because I do believe that Education is doing their very best to really keep their finger on the pulse.

Mr. Speaker, I have delayed bringing this up because it is emotional. And I will try not to get emotional about this. But, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to do something about domestic violence. We have not yet talked about it. I have not seen it much in anybody's Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have to take a look at putting in place some measurement of protection for the victims of domestic abuse.

Mr. Speaker, I am so sorry that we have gotten to this point. And my heart goes out to the families of all victims out there, whether they are silently suffering or have incurred the kinds of traumas that we have heard about occurring in the recent days. And, Mr. Speaker, if you were to ask me . . . and I am not trying to go down a garden path here. But we had a horrible situation happen on Remembrance Day.

I personally will say that yesterday I started a new legacy of remembrance. For me it is going to always now be about the victims and the survivors of domestic violence. And as a Government and as a country, I really believe that we need to step forward and make some real movement in the protections around domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, we have had the third sector. We have had other parliamentarians. We have had members in the private sector all speak up for a domestic violence court. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of initiative that would make this legislative agenda for this and the coming year worth my while. If we could look at how we can pull together and create a special space where these domestic incidents can be dealt with in a more private, secure and protected place than having [victims] exposed, thrown in with the rest of everybody and everything else that is going on.

Clearly, domestic violence in Bermuda is a very, very touchy subject. And it is sensitive. We are a close community. We need to provide as much protection for our victims as we possibly can. Mr. Speak-

er, we are fortunate enough that we have a Madam Attorney General. When I hear and when I listen to and when I feel the kinds of campaigns that are out there, the #MeToo and the others, you know, I am not thinking about that as, *Oh, well, only the people who may have had some trauma need to go out and support.* I am going to be straight up. I might get in trouble for this, Mr. Speaker. But if a woman is a victim of domestic violence in Bermuda, in my opinion that one person, that one victim deserves all of the women of Bermuda to come and stand and support her through that.

And if I am being discriminatory, then I will stand up and I will take the brunt of it. But, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying to you is that this is not about me. This is about the fact that one woman needed our help, and we need to be there for her. Stand up for it! It has nothing to do with what I am doing today, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to try not to be emotional. We need to drop everything. I do not care—man, woman, child—drop everything. We cannot have this kind of violence in this country. And much of it is going on behind closed doors! We need to figure this out.

So I am calling for a domestic violence court, and I am calling on the idea that we need to strengthen our domestic violence legislation. We cannot have people running out on bail! We cannot have people going through . . . I understand getting a protection order in Bermuda, and any court, takes forever. And it is ridiculous! They are victims! So the victim goes through all of that confusion to get her protective order, and he (or she) looks at it, spits on it, Mr. Speaker, spits on our legislation and goes back and does what it is they want to do.

Mr. Speaker, we have got to stop this. And we have got to put legislation in place that says if we have or the police have fair and enough warning signs to say that somebody is being victimised in their homes, then we need to step up and act on it. Pull the person out, pull the victim up, pull the perpetrator out. And we need to protect them until we can figure this out, not throw them back in together and have things escalate. It is unacceptable! Now, we have a strong Attorney General right now. And I am calling on her. Please, I am begging you! We need a domestic violence court, and we need to take a good hard look at our domestic violence legislation and strengthen that up. Clean it up!

This is the kind of example of how we need to have a cultural change, Mr. Speaker. We cannot act like, *Oh, this was how it was done in the 1960s.* We are not there anymore. We cannot just put a Band-Aid on it. It is time! Take the organisation, take the culture, shift it up! Take a new look at it. That is what our job is. And the Opposition is just as—this is all of us.

I am moving on, Mr. Speaker. Do I have a few minutes left?

The Speaker: Member, you have about just under four minutes left.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Mr. Speaker, I am going to squeak in a little bit on transport. Transport was absolutely mentioned one time. The word “transport” showed up one time in the Throne Speech. And I am going to focus in on road safety because I did not see that hardly anywhere.

Now, when I say road safety, Mr. Speaker, I have seen the commercials for road safety. I know the Road Safety Council is working hard trying to do what they are trying to do. And everybody is trying to get out there and do their part.

But again, Mr. Speaker, this is cultural and organisational transformation. We have got to change the culture. And I love the culture. I am going to speak to road safety, Mr. Speaker. So Bermuda is absolutely darling. When you can drive down the street and people are waving, and people will slow down and stop their car on a primary road to let the person who is coming out of the carriage lane—*Let’s give them the right of way*. Mr. Speaker, we have got 40,000-odd vehicles on these roads now, on roads that mostly are still horse-and-carriage roads. We cannot act like the Sunday leisure driver making up our own rules as we go on the roads.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, we need to take a good hard look at our road safety rules. Let us get back down to business. Make it illegal. Make it illegal to put your hand out of the window and wave people down to slow down because you have decided you want to stop in the middle of the road and let somebody out. I appreciate that. It is lovely. And I feel so good when people slow down and let me out of a main road. It is lovely. But I am not sure we can [continue to live] with that.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Another point of clarification, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify to that Member, it is actually part of the driving exam that you put your hand out the window, then wave it up and down when you are slowing down. So that is actually part of learning how to drive.

The Speaker: Continue, Member.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: My point exactly, Mr. Speaker. My point exactly. You know, I was about in my early 20s when my parents started to scare me about, *Don’t put your arm out the door! Don’t put your arm out the window!*

The Speaker: Member, you have one minute left on your clock.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: So, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that we can continue this conversation, because there is so much to speak to on transport. I know that that will come.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am done.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

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

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker! How are you today, my friend?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Very well indeed. How about you?

The Speaker: I am not bad at all. I have 30 minutes on the clock with your name on it. How is that?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are so kind.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, I would like to also thank all of those workers who have been on the front lines since we had the pandemic here in Bermuda. In fact, I want to single out the Bermuda police and also the sanitation workers. These guys, the police and the sanitation workers in particular, they work. Whether it is rain, thunder, you get your garbage collected. And the police likewise, if they have to go out in the weather, they do that, and all of the other workers [too], Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank those who donated food, particularly the Marketplace, the supermarkets, the banks who donated money, international business who donated money. The supermarkets, Marketplace and Supermart, continue to provide cooked and uncooked food to the Bermuda public during this difficult time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in our Throne Speech there is a quote from the book *Heritage*, excerpt, I should say, about the Doctor Kenneth Robinson’s book. Mr. Speaker, I would like to go out on a limb to say that I think . . . I am going to ask the Premier of Bermuda to consider making an apology on behalf of Bermuda for the treatment Dr. Robinson received when he was in education. Some may recall that when the job was advertised for a Chief Education Officer, even though he had a doctorate and had all of the qualifications, the job was given to someone else who had a sports degree. But Dr. Robinson continued to go and try to fix the education curriculum, particularly for Blacks.

And in doing so, his mortgage was called even though he had never missed a payment. So all of the hard work that he did, I believe it is appropriate that we give an apology, send a written apology to his family for all of the work that he has done and how he was treated in those days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the Reply Speech from the Opposition they talked about the Economic Recovery Plan. I am so glad that our finance in Bermuda is headed by our Minister Curtis Dickinson. I think I said in this House before that he is probably the best Finance Minister we have ever had in the last 30 years. I think it is 40 now when I add up. He is very cool, calm and competent. And I feel so comfortable knowing, even though the position we are in, that I am very happy that he is the one who is there leading us here. Because Curtis Dickinson is one who could be making more somewhere else. But he has given some of his time to the country to help us out. And I am so proud of him, and I hope he stays on for us some more time, Mr. Speaker.

I also heard the Opposition say the Government disrespected the police in slashing the budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you call \$145,000 a big slash in the budget, I am not too alarmed by that at all. Not one iota am I alarmed by that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech the Government has increased the coverage for prescription drugs by \$1,000. I think people are very thankful for that. I certainly am thankful for the people, particularly our seniors. But one concern I do have is that the insurance companies have taken liberties to not pay for certain drugs, a particular drug, when it has been prescribed by their doctors. And it is a drug that they paid for before. I think they are wrong. And I think the insurance companies have to pay those people back because the people are paying for coverage for prescription drugs. And they are prescribed by a doctor because you cannot get it without a doctor's prescription. And they should not be taking advantage of that, Mr. Speaker. I would urge that they start to pay for the cost of those drugs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on the hotel industry, the Opposition continues to say that the hotel industry is going back, or we have got decreasing numbers from the 1980s. But let me say, Mr. Speaker, from 1988 up until early 1999, we lost over 1,000 rooms. That is over 2,000 bed-nights a day through hotel closures—closures. Not closed for a period of time, but closed forever. Marriott, Belmont, Bermudiana, Club Med, and I think some of the smaller ones. So, yes, the numbers can be down. Because when you talk about 2,000 beds, that is 14,000 bed-nights a week, it has to go down. I repeat. I have said this before. At one time we had over 10,000 beds in Bermuda. Now we have barely got 5,000. So, yes, it has gone down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be very long. But I want to thank the Minister of Transport for . . .

well, let me say this here, Mr. Speaker. It is more under Tourism, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, Bermuda is a very expensive destination. And we need five-star properties in order to be commensurate with what it costs to live and travel to Bermuda. I want to thank hotels like the Hamilton Princess. They have done and continue to do improvements in that hotel to make it a five-star-plus hotel. Then you have the Tucker's Point, The Reefs and the Loren. And as I understand it, Cambridge Beaches and the new owners of Princess (both of them, new owners), I think that is their endeavour, to make those properties five-star, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in my estimation I think Bermuda needs at least 90 per cent of their hotels at the five-star level because they are so expensive. I think there are plenty of clientele out there who are prepared to pay that five-star rate. But you have got to get service. Five-star service is good service. It is push-button service. They are not asking for slaves; they are asking for service. That is what you get from five-star-plus hotels. So I think that those hotels . . . in fact, Hamilton Princess seems to be training a lot of Bermudians and giving them promotions. That bodes well for us here in Bermuda, for all of us in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, also I would like to thank the Minister for Transport for trying to make lemonade out of sour oranges. Now, Mr. Speaker, you are much older than me. You know what sour oranges are, or sour lemons. There is a lemon and then there is a sour lemon. And with the sour lemons, you have to mix up a little salt, pepper and some baking soda in order to consume them.

The Speaker: One of those old remedies.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes. Sugar would not even sweeten them up. But this Minister is doing his best to convert those sour lemons into lemonade, Mr. Speaker. So I applaud him trying to get more airlift when we have no money because all of the money is going to Aecon on a deal that the previous Government signed with them. And they paid \$4.4 million—I know was over \$4 million—to lawyers to draw up a contract that has no variance, Mr. Speaker. That is unusual for any contract that long. Law contracts have variances in them. So the Minister is doing his best to try to help us, trying to get some improvements there. But there is no way we can get it back from them without paying a hefty sum of money that we do not have, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Bermuda are paying millionaires, guaranteeing them minimum revenue. This is what was signed by the OBA Government. They signed a minimum guarantee. We do not even own a plane. We do not control the weather, nor do we have any control over a pandemic. Nothing is in that contract about any things like that that would

happen that we have no control over. How can you guarantee a contract, Mr. Speaker? I can assure you if I had my way, I would not pay one monkey dime to those folks. They would have to take me to court because I think that is a contract that needs . . . it needs to be addressed by the court because nobody can guarantee a minimum guarantee when you do not even own a plane, Mr. Speaker.

Then the previous Government has even got groups out there to verify and say it is a good deal. How can it be a good deal when over the last 15 months we are paying them an average of \$2.7 million a month in the minimum guarantee—\$2.7 million? Mr. Speaker, when you take our revenue down there in 2012–2013 and the maximum that we were getting in revenue was \$2.1 million a month, why are we paying \$600,000 or more per month to this group? That is not a good deal at all, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing good about that deal, Mr. Speaker. A lot of money, Mr. Speaker, that we are paying. And the previous Government says that was a good deal, Mr. Speaker. So again I want to thank the Minister for trying to make some lemonade out of those sour, sour oranges, Mr. Speaker.

Now also in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, the Government is trying to expand the residential population and also trying to get more youth employment. Now, this is a very emotive topic to Bermudians and for good reason, Mr. Speaker. One has to know the history to understand why Bermudians get very emotive about that.

Mr. Speaker, it was in 1842 that they had an Act passed in Bermuda, it was called an Act to encourage emigrants to Bermuda. And not only that, but every time they have been on an initiative or an Act of Parliament to bring people in, it is for two reasons. One is to increase the white population, and two is to undercut the recently freed slaves' demand for wages. Those are the reasons why they brought them here. So it has not been very good, Mr. Speaker. And when we look at the history of bringing in foreigners to Bermuda, Bermudians have seen foreigners take their jobs. [They] trained foreigners, and the foreigner was the one to get hired, Mr. Speaker.

So I understand it. I understand the dynamics of it, increasing and expanding the residential population. But we must understand why our people get very emotive about that. The history would tell you why these folks were brought in here. And with the experience that a lot of them have had . . . So my thought on this, Mr. Speaker, is that the more people you bring into this country for jobs, the more protection Bermudians need. I mean, there is only one group of workers in Bermuda that has protection because they are Bermudian. And they are the civil servants, Mr. Speaker. Under the Public Service Commission Regulations 2001, by Bermuda statute Bermudians come first under this legislation.

Not only that, where there is a non-Bermudian who comes second, it would be a non-Bermudian spouse. They come second. So I am not requesting that my Government do anything that is out of the ordinary. The white-collar workers, civil servants are protected through laws. And I think we need to protect all Bermudian workers because of our history. Because you will find many jobs in Bermuda right now that Bermudians once had being held by PRCs.

I am not against PRCs. As I said it earlier, I understand why we are trying to increase the residential population. I am just looking for protection for Bermudian workers, Mr. Speaker, because we already have it in place. I repeat: We already have it in place for the public service, all of the workers who come under the Public Service Commission status. So I ask for that for all workers in this country because we know what could happen if there is no protection. Bermudians will not get hired first in most instances. It has been proven, Mr. Speaker.

Also, you know, Mr. Speaker, when you were coming up (I am much behind you), when we were going to school most of these firms had apprenticeship programmes. You had PW's, Holmes Williams and Purvey, Masters, Burland, Conyers & Marirea, and the list goes on. They had apprentice programmes. And we were always able to supply our carpenters (that is from Burland's), motor mechanics from PW's and Holmes Williams and Masters. And masons. We had those programmes in place. I do know there are some programmes in place that the Government has had people working via the Workforce Development. They hire people to be waiters and this type of thing.

But somehow I think we have to make some arrangements with some of the employers. Now, some employers are very good. I must say that because you see they are training our young lawyers. You always see in the papers they have taken two here who are doing the pupillage in these firms, which is great, and we encourage that. We just hope that more employers would take it upon themselves to take on apprentices in their firms to train our Bermudians. That is when I would see the commitment to Bermudians. I am not against foreigners. I am not against PRCs. The thing is that we must protect Bermudians. That is what we have to do. They have got to be protected.

And they have to feel protected, because if they do not, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have some problems. If you know the history, it is very easy to appreciate how our people feel. And I think we have got to take that on because we had landscapers. In fact, I was talking to some landscapers who asked to meet me, and I met them, actually two of them. The experience that they had in a landscaping firm was not good at all. I think we should mandate whatever we want to do to control this, that if you have got a landscaping firm that has X number of foreign em-

ployees, they should be made to take on X number of Bermudians with a structured programme to enhance the training that the Bermudians have already had.

So you find guys like Roger Parris and Workforce Development and a lot of other folks that have these programmes training guys about landscaping—not only landscaping, but also how to use the tools. They are training all of these fellows up, and some of them are getting jobs of various [kinds]. There is a little grey area out there, and I think we need to fix that. And I think we can fix it without much fanfare. We just call these guys in. I think basically we have got some people who are fair employers. We call them in and we put this to them. And I think we can get that going.

But again I really believe that just like the civil servants under the Public Service Commission are protected; all Bermudians should be protected as per those Public Service Commission Regulations 2001. This is a Bermuda statutory instrument. It is written in there: Bermudians come first, then the spouse. So we can fix that. So I am not asking for anything outside of the ordinary, just some protection for our Bermudian workers. And I think if we had done that, Bermudians would be . . . I think there is a perception that some Bermudians do not like foreign workers. I do not think so. But I think even if that were true, then you can remove that by protecting Bermudians.

I am not saying that we have got to hire any Bermudian, you know. You have got to be sensible about the whole thing. I do not think I even need to have to even explain that. But Bermudians want protection for their jobs, because some Bermudians are having problems with this expanding of the residential population because they do not see any protection for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those remarks I thank you for allowing me to participate in this.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

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

Any other Member?

Would any other Member like to make a contribution to the debate on the Throne Speech?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, MP Jarion Richardson.

The Speaker: Opposition Whip, you have your 30 minutes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can you hear me just fine? I am in a new location.

The Speaker: I hear you, but it is very faint. It would be better if we could hear you a little louder.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Okay. I will speak up, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity to make a contribution to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to start by stating my gratitude for the front-line workers, as expressed by the Opposition Leader, during COVID-19. I do think that the front-line workers have done an incredible job, and I think a lot of people (I hate to say it) get credit. But the front-line workers are the tip of the spear and have always been so.

I can probably say that I was a member of the Bermuda Police Service and got to work with some people who really, really made Bermuda a better place by their contribution, as well as the Bermuda Regiment, now the Royal Bermuda Regiment. And we are starting to see thanks being extended to some of our front-line workers by everyone. There is a new Royal Bermuda Regiment Association, et cetera, who is trying to make sure that our soldiers get acknowledged and get some benefit out of service from other industries.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that I really appreciate their work. I am tremendously grateful. And I will always pay attention, and I think we all should pay attention to the things that they say about Bermuda, because the things that they say are the things that are most evident. They are the ones who deal with everything from our crime to our social ills, and they are the ones who have to pick up the slack. To that end, they are the ones we should be listening to in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to read from the Throne Speech, specifically page number 1, about changes.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech reads, "Changes that were deferred have now become imperative for survival. Changes that were resisted now transcend stubbornness, as resistance is negligent for future generations. Changes denied defy the sacred trust of elected office and do not serve the needs of the people."

It is very powerful and very true, Mr. Speaker. But I suspect that the author and myself might have a different perspective on what changes we wanted to bring about. I would start, Mr. Speaker, by saying the first change is when we deliberate in this Honourable House under your stewardship, Mr. Speaker, that it is done with a kind of seriousness and decorum. I speak about that, Mr. Speaker, because I am still a freshman for all intents and purposes. I am quite new to this. But oftentimes I hear comments that just boggle the mind. They are not sensible or logical in any way. And sometimes they come from friends of mine, Honourable Members, one of whom said something like, *The Opposition opposes success*.

I just wanted to be absolutely clear that I just could not disagree more with that statement. I do not think that those who have a different political philosophy than mine . . . I do not believe that they oppose success of Bermuda. I think that is a very unfair comment. And it does nothing, absolutely nothing to make sure that we work together in this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader said in his Reply to the Throne Speech that what we are looking for is a vibrant, prosperous and safe Bermuda. That is true. So, Mr. Speaker, with that now I will contribute to this debate on the Reply to the Throne Speech and the Throne Speech itself. I likewise would go to that Good Book, and there is a quote from there. I would like to read with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Continue.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And it is, "See, this alone I found, that God made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes."

I say that, Mr. Speaker, "schemes" is a very negative way of describing this. But I do think that a better description is over-complicating something. I think that having some 31 priority projects in an Economic Recovery Plan, given the significance of our challenge, is an over-complication, to be frank, Mr. Speaker. We have quite a few categories of silos to concern ourselves with in this Honourable House. Education, jobs, crime, roads, labour relations, legislation—there are a few things happening here, Mr. Speaker. But the Opposition Leader had spoken to a point of view where he said, *Let's focus on one, two, three, four priorities and get those over the line*. Because we have enough issues, Mr. Speaker, that we could, quite by accident, tie ourselves up in knots chasing all of the things that we can conceive of.

That ideation, that sort of perpetual thinking, *down the road, next thing, next thing, next thing, next flavour, next flavour, next flavour*, means that we leave a lot in our wake left undone or half-done, Mr. Speaker. And to that end, though, I will pick up where my honourable colleague left off with domestic violence, because I do think that this is something we have left behind.

Mr. Speaker, when a uniformed officer gets called into a scenario, they do not have the full tools of a \$1 billion government available to use at that point in time. They have to deal with the circumstances as they see them. And there may be an ability, there may be a later facility to connect with another government department to another resource. But the one thing that always struck me, as one of those responding to those scenarios, Mr. Speaker, was how that circumstance arose and how it kept arising. So my honourable colleague was speaking to the courts, for example, or the protection orders. And uniformed officers are replying to the same events night after night. And it seems like there is no other branch that is dealing with

this seriously. Now, that cannot be true, Mr. Speaker. And that is my point on absurdity; that just cannot be right.

But what it does indicate, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a lack of connection between the people who are showing up in an emergency capacity and the people who are doing it on a nine-to-five. Obviously, this kind of job does not bode well for a nine-to-five personality—but those who are showing up when it is not 3:30 in the morning. And that connection is what we are missing here again.

We have, along with my honourable colleague, roads that are designed for horses and buggies. And we do not have any horses and buggies. You see one on the roads these days, Mr. Speaker, you feel just so nervous for them. What we have is rocket ships connected to wheels, these bikes zipping around like it is the Mad Max of Thunderdome out there, Mr. Speaker. And our roads are simply not designed for it. Monday morning traffic is like we are trying to get killed out here. But road design and maintenance . . . Have the police opined on these matters, especially given the state of the roads when they are poorly maintained, Mr. Speaker? The scheduling of roadworks, for example, means that we are going to see overflow from one road into another one. Are the police okay with that overflow? Because they are going to need to change their patrol patterns based on that. So again, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that there is a connection. We are not seeing the connection.

Mr. Speaker, another one we are missing here is gangs. These gangs did not come from nowhere. They are not disappearing so that we cannot see them anymore. They are a presence in our lives. They are persistent. And they will not go away on their own. Mr. Speaker, those gangs did not show up from nowhere. There is no way that we can turn around and say we did not see it coming. So where do they start, Mr. Speaker? The problem for me is that if we have a gang shooting, it is bad no matter where it happens. That [a gang] was large enough and well-equipped enough to shoot someone is the problem, Mr. Speaker. That someone is of that mind-set that this was how you resolve conflict, Mr. Speaker . . . that came from somewhere. That was not accidental.

And what are we doing to stop that from manifesting? Because parts of our community have been living with gangs on a more consistent basis than other parts; that is no doubt. And the residents and communities where gangs are able to move about freely, control the movement of residents . . . that is no way to live a life, Mr. Speaker. And sure as heck you can bet your bottom dollar that it is hard to pay attention to other things like jobs, like education when that is the reality you are facing. Someone somewhere . . . this did not come from nowhere, and it is not going to go away by itself. What are we going to do about these

gangs, Mr. Speaker? And I do not think that CCTV is the answer to the problem.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, my point is that these problems are all interconnected and their causes are multiple. So if we think that speeding would get dealt with by screaming at the police, then we are wrong. If we think that speeding is going to get fixed by just speed cameras, then we are wrong. If we think speeding is going to get dealt with by putting 20 more magistrates on the bench, then we are wrong. Speeding is likely to get fixed if we do all of that stuff, or certainly take parts from every one of those silos, Mr. Speaker.

That is my point for how we are going to proceed forward from where we are today, Mr. Speaker, is fewer ideas at the national level and clearer projects within the space that we have to concern ourselves with. So, for example, domestic crime, domestic violence, working within that space, figuring that out. The disaster that is the roads right now, figuring that out. Gangs, working on that. Thirty-one initiatives in economic recovery, Mr. Speaker? I do not see it. The reason I do not see it, Mr. Speaker, is because there is a conflict between the words that get uttered and the actions that we all see in Bermuda right now.

The Opposition Leader mentioned, for example, the withdrawal of 50 per cent of charitable streams as a consequence of the Trade Union [and Labour Relations] (Consolidation) Act [2021], Mr. Speaker. The ability to retain some money was taken away, and then we are going to turn around and tell the charities, *Well, we'll help you get loans*. Mr. Speaker, a loan is hardly a good thing. It might [give you a] break [even] for a minute, but it is not going to last, not when you are teetering like a lot of our charities are, not when they are seeing an increase for their services and certainly not for the benefit of that charity over time.

Speaking of which, Mr. Speaker, going back to the point on connections, the need for more charitable services again did not come from nowhere. Right? So are we engaging with them? Are we asking them, *Where do you see this coming from and what can we do to help you?* Because I know what is not going to help them, Mr. Speaker. Or rather . . . I am sorry. That sounded . . . I just cannot believe I said that. I think I have been hanging around with the wrong crowd, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that putting loans and debt to charitable organisations is a good idea.

Mr. Speaker, we have been told, on my point of conflicting words versus actions, that casinos are an important part of tourism. But they are not here, Mr. Speaker, so how important could they be?

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to conflicting words versus actions, we heard for some time that there are going to be proposed amendments to the Bermuda Constitution. We have heard for some time that the structure of our Constitution Order will be in some way updated and amended. But we just do not

see any forward motion in that space, Mr. Speaker. That gets down to trust, because everyone is going to trust this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, to do the best thing. Even though we are going to sit in this Honourable House and propose one thing and debate another and object and, theoretically, Mr. Speaker, what comes out of this Honourable House is the best of all of those ideas. But I cannot see how we are building trust with the voters, Mr. Speaker, if words constantly conflict with actions.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wrap up with some thoughts on the Throne Speech. I look forward to going into the Budget Debate and seeing how these initiatives tie into the key performance indicators for the budget, Mr. Speaker, because that continuity would show connection, intention, trust. It would show that we are not just using words for the purpose of using words, but rather there is an actual performance for an outcome coming from this. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I am looking forward to as an outcome is to see how we navigate using the Bermuda Plan or using the model of the Bermuda Plan to apply to the marine development Act. That would be quite something to see how we get all of that, Mr. Speaker.

But if we could do one thing—I would say one more thing before we go—and put all of these great ideas into action, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, if we could pay attention to the spaces between the ideas, to the cracks, to the connections, if we could start listening to our experts . . . because oftentimes we seem to want credit for low-hanging fruit, Mr. Speaker, like having a press release, a press conference because someone built or repaired some stairs. We have lots of stairs in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of them require repair. And we do not want to have a press conference every time someone fixes a set of stairs.

To the credit of the Minister of Labour and Immigration, we are going to move into a digital process for administering the immigration applications. I recently countersigned one of them, and you could see the line on the paper, Mr. Speaker, from when the documents were originally made and obviously they have gone through facsimile and photocopy. And I just thought, *Sheesh. Here we are, 2021, multi-billion economy. And apparently we haven't figured out how to put paper into the computer yet.* So as much as I think it is a good idea, I do not think it is something to put a flag up about. I think that this is the kind of thing you have got to do to move forward. That is the kind of connection between the silos that matters, Mr. Speaker.

So I hope that all 31 priority projects and policies come into fruition. I really do, because I think it is absurd that there is a position that we do not want success for Bermuda, that I do not want success for Bermuda. I really do hope it works. But what I think would work better, Mr. Speaker, is focusing on one, two, three, four priorities on that huge national level,

and then spending the rest of our time fixing all of the little broken things that other people have to accommodate for, like our charities.

With that said, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Any other Member?

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

The Speaker: Member?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy Leader?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.

The Speaker: You have your 30 minutes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker.

Though I was not here physically when the Throne Speech was delivered, like many others, certainly most of the country, I had the benefit of the presentation virtually. But I was certainly on the Island in spirit and remembering that last week was a very important day of presentation for the country. Certainly, as I was in another jurisdiction, people were having similar discussions and certainly paying attention to Glasgow about issues that pertain to the future of humanity and the issues that not only Bermuda, but the globe faces when it comes to our future climate and nature and the environment that we all share with all other species on the planet.

So here we are today. It is part of a process of certainly dealing with what will be the agenda for the Government and the focused priorities for at least the next parliamentary year. As today is essentially the last day before the discussions in Glasgow come to a conclusion and countries deliberate on what will be that agenda, we are also in a part of a process of deliberating on what will be this country's and the Government's agenda for the upcoming year.

I must thank my colleagues, and not only my Cabinet colleagues, but my other parliamentary colleagues as part of the Progressive Labour Party for the attention and contribution they made to how we as a Government have put together this agenda. I do note, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes the Opposition has sort of given a next-level critique on the Throne Speech and seems to have thought that it was uninspiring or unimaginative or did not have anything new or these sorts of things. Well, I do note that the length of the Reply was considerably longer than 2012. Per-

haps the Government is more focused on what matters. It does not necessarily need to have a lot of text to say what the country needs, to show that we know what direction this country should take for the next year [and] how we will be focused on the affairs of state. You do not necessarily need a lot of text to say that. But you must be substantive. You must be clear. You must show that you know what needs to be accomplished and make it clear as to what you are going to be focusing on. And certainly the Throne Speech does that.

We are in a period, Mr. Speaker, coming out of certainly one of the most trying and challenging periods of Bermuda's history with the very health of our country challenged by the presence of the pandemic, by the economic well-being of our Island under considerable stress, the social dislocation that those two experiences have brought to the community and certainly the need to chart our way forward, as we still deal with the issues of the pandemic.

This Throne Speech outlines the focus of this Government, an Economic Recovery Plan that makes clear 31 key initiatives, seven key areas of focus that we as a Government, having had contributions from within and outside of the Government amongst our Cabinet Members, our caucus and other persons, and [having] benefited from globally or internationally qualified expertise to shape what we have put together, the thoughts and ideas of the Government and those whom we have worked with to make sure that we can reshape this country going forward in a positive and a restorative way out of this experience.

We are in a position like so many other countries, Mr. Speaker, gripped by the same circumstance. And some perhaps suffering much more than we have, having to find their way. But we have crafted an Economic Recovery Plan for Bermuda that focuses on the key areas that are needed to ensure that we are on a path to restoring the Island to better economic and social health, and a new plan for health care, which after the past nearly two years one should not doubt that a better way to finance and provide quality care is sorely needed.

This is not an era or a time, Mr. Speaker, for doing what you used to do. It is what you should be doing going forward. There is not a country on this planet that is not looking for a better way forward on almost every aspect of life, and particularly as we face climate change and the volatility that that in itself brings to the planet and certainly to our little Island. Mitigating its impacts and doing what we can to contribute to the global effort must be a part of the agenda. And the Throne Speech focuses on that.

I can just touch on some of the areas for which I myself have responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Island is moving away from fossil fuels and shaping an environment where we can attract the investments, because this is definitely about attracting investments, creating jobs and economic growth. And in

some cases, Mr. Speaker, some of the themes of the Paris Agreement are also the themes that we as a country must think for ourselves. We must deal with litigation adaptations, resilience, and loss and damages. Those are things that countries like us have to deal with, the loss and damage from volatility of weather, the mitigation of the impacts of climate change and adapting to the new environment that the globe is facing by taking the necessary steps.

Certainly the regulatory sandbox that is proposed in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is about attracting innovation in the energy sector so that as new technology emerges, we have a framework that attracts and invites innovation in Bermuda as we have desired innovation in so many other parts of our economy. Certainly the international business, insurance and reinsurance sectors themselves thrive on innovation and adaptation.

To be competitive across the globe, we must do the same in the energy sector because diversifying how we generate our power is not only essential, but it is also necessary for us to move away from fossil fuels to convert to a platform that is reliant on renewables and that is clean and that is safe. But also, such diversification brings about growth. It will attract new investment into energy in Bermuda. It will also create new jobs because the renewable energy sector will need new skills, new expertise to maintain it. So there are new jobs that are going to be created.

As we diversify with different types of [power] generation that grow the economy, that grow economic activity and that potentially lower the cost of energy for every consumer as well (which is why there is a proposal to address the issue of how we regulate fuel, Mr. Speaker), there is certainly a fuel surcharge on every bill that aggravates many a person. As we continue to be dependent at this time on fossil fuel, that fuel adjustment rate will continue to be a feature in our billing of every resident and every business in Bermuda. And right now the cost of oil is going up, so that [has] an impact on that bill. That is not a factor that we control; that is a factor of the global market. But the only way to release ourselves from that exposure is by moving away from fossil fuels altogether.

So the path moving toward [power] generation that is not dependent on fossil fuel is actually great economic sense. It is great environmental sense. And it is a great decision for this country. And because this Government is bold, brave and ambitious, we have set a high standard for Bermuda. Not our predecessors, who had much lower goals set in this area, we are going for 100 per cent renewable generation for this country ultimately, Mr. Speaker.

The IRP [Integrated Resource Plan] talks about 85 [per cent renewable energy], but I hope, and I am working as the Minister responsible for energy, to be able to tell the country how we are going to get to 100 [per cent]. And I look forward to telling that story when all and everything is put together. But it will take

innovation. It will take new technology. But that will also add new skills, new investment and diversity to our energy sector.

Some of the other things that we have done, Mr. Speaker, to actually ensure that Bermuda is on the right path, is put together . . . and the Honourable Premier talked about how we are advancing the economic recovery of the country. We have a framework in place, Mr. Speaker, that will further grow our presence in the global telecommunications sector with subsea cables. We already are a crucial participant in the transatlantic telecommunications network. This Government has put in place legislation to expand that participation further. And we are getting the actual interest from real global companies to run those transatlantic subsea cables through Bermuda as the need grows for greater broadband, greater telecommunications activity. Bermuda will be the hub of the North Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, to just touch on further issues around the environment, this Government has made a step to make Bermuda better. If *Build Back Better* is a theme that is very much involved with how we are going to redevelop in the post-pandemic world, we are building back better the protection for our environment. We have already passed legislation, Mr. Speaker, that will create a higher threshold of protection for our land, for private holdings, so that not only will the existing levels of protection exist as they do for public holdings, but a higher level of protection for private holdings so that we can protect more of our land space. We in the Ministry of Environment are doing more to ensure that we focus on nature-based solutions to improving the environment, such as a tree-planting strategy. Many others have begun to do this, but we as a Government are actually putting together a plan as well.

But the recovery, Mr. Speaker, will not only be about nature-based solutions, but also will be people-focused. And the 31 initiatives that the Government has put together are also people-focused, about rejuvenating our workforce, about ensuring that business, small business in particular—where part of our focus has been in giving greater opportunity to small businesspeople, and people aspiring to be entrepreneurs—will have greater capacity available to them from the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation.

It is also ensuring fairness when it comes to people's relationships with financial institutions, which is why the conduct of banks is a focus. And there will be greater legislation to address that as well, Mr. Speaker, in the next Parliament. Because as we did the same thing with the debt collection industries, which was essentially a Wild West of unregulated operators who did not always treat persons fairly, we want to bring a much sounder regulatory framework to the conduct of our banks. This is not anything novel. This is what goes on in every well-run financial juris-

diction in the world where banking is a key pillar of the actual economic life.

Banks are required to have a certain standard of conduct. And as we know, Mr. Speaker, in the past there have been issues around certain historical practices of our banks. I am not suggesting that they are necessarily rampant now, but those practices brought about certain fear and intimidation and concern in the past. But it is important that we have a banking and financial services industry where conduct is aspiring to be what is best practice internationally, as well, even as we try to improve the financial health of the country. Because people need to feel that they can make an investment in their lives and be treated equitably and fairly in the marketplace. This is very important, very, very important, as we hear stories about some of the unfortunate experiences of people certainly during the pandemic period, as well as predating the pandemic. It is important that people feel that they can get fairness in their dealings with financial institutions.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is laser-sharp in its focus on what we need to do to improve and move beyond the pandemic economically and to improve the welfare and quality of life for the citizens and residents of this beautiful Island.

As I have returned from a very interesting conference in the UK, I am more inspired to work on these areas because I am not only concerned about the welfare of our people and their health—that means their medical health, their financial health, their social health and the overall welfare of our country. I am also concerned about the fact that we also must work together, Mr. Speaker, so that our environment is protected and that we have a balance between finding opportunity as well as protection of the natural world that we live in, and that we ensure for the future of our children that we make the right choices, that we make the right choices economically, we make the right choices in our social and health welfare, but we make the right choices that will ensure that they have a world that they will inherit, that they will be able to aspire to leadership and opportunity in, and that we in this era will have made the right decisions in our lives.

Certainly this Government is aspiring to make the right decisions in their education, in creating opportunities and a healthy economic environment so that those of today and those coming by tomorrow take advantage of what we all love about Bermuda. We will have it available to them as we in this era have had it available to ourselves.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my comments and look forward to listening to the rest of the debate.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman. MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are very faint.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I shall speak up.
Better?

The Speaker: Project your voice or get a little closer to the mic.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will do that. I will ask maybe my colleague, MP Richardson, to move.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will work on my best Shakespearean voice for you, Mr. Speaker, so that you hear what I have to say.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: *To be or not to be.*

Mr. Scott Pearman: Indeed that is the question.

The Speaker: Okay. You have your 30 minutes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, can you hear me now?

The Speaker: Yes. You have your 30 minutes.

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

The Speaker: But not just for me to hear you, but for the listening audience to be able to hear you as well.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, I hope they can hear me too. I hope they can.

The Speaker: Okay. Good.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, I am no longer a freshman, as MP Richardson described himself, but I am certainly still a sophomore and these are still early days in the House for me, having started in 2018. I have got a theme going so far on Throne Speech Replies, and that is why I try to offer constructive criticism in a bipartisan effort, recognise the good and the bad in a Throne Speech. So I do offer some criticism this evening, but I offer it as constructive criticism.

Mr. Speaker, the context of this Throne Speech and today's Throne Speech Reply is singular. It is COVID-19. And there is no denying that. I too would like to follow on the Opposition Leader and

many other speakers this evening from both sides of the aisle and thank our front-line workers. And by that I do not simply mean those in emergency services, although I thank them too. But I thank those who went to work during COVID-19 and toiled, particularly in our grocery stores or our petrol stations, in order to make sure that Bermuda, as best it could, kept moving.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Throne Speech, I have already gone into press on it and been somewhat critical. I am not suggesting that all of the failures in the Throne Speech are the fault of the Government. I recognise as anyone who read and considered the Throne Speech would have recognised, sensibly recognised, that there are many errors and problems in Bermuda as a result of COVID-19. But we must not kid ourselves; Bermuda's economy was in no great shapes before COVID-19. And some of the solutions that have been offered in our Throne Speech are good. We will commend them. But some are very thin indeed.

Mr. Speaker, before going to the Throne Speech, I would also like to just comment on two statements that were made by the Government this week between the Throne Speech and our Reply today. Mr. Speaker, it is *A Tale of Two Statements*, with apologies to Charles Dickens, who said, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness . . ." How true. The Throne Speech as we all know was last Friday, and on Tuesday there was a follow-up statement by the Premier. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I will quote it directly.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: This is what he was reported to have said: "I don't think that the Government requires any more imagination . . . The people of this country don't need more ideas, what they need is execution."

So it is *A Tale of Two Statements*, Mr. Speaker, and that is the first. Now let me politely both agree and disagree. I would respectfully disagree with the Premier when he says that the Government does not require any more imagination and that the people of this country do not need more ideas. I would respectfully agree with the Premier that execution is critical. Service delivery is the beating heart of government. You can have all of the ideas you like, but if you do not deliver the services, people are not going to be very happy.

And yes, execution is important. But, Mr. Speaker, it has to be execution of the right policies. If you are out at sea and stranded in a boat and you start to row with great gusto and efficiency and effectiveness, but you are rowing away from the shore, that is not a very good idea. So it has to be execution of the right policies and not of the wrong ones.

Mr. Speaker, I called it *A Tale of Two Statements*. It was reported today. I think the statement

was made on Thursday by the Minister of Finance. And again with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I quote: "Curtis Dickinson added it was part of his job to help develop creative ways to fund the Government."

"He asked: 'Does the Government have the money today, in a conventional sense, to pay for all of the things in the Throne Speech? The answer would be no."

"But that assumes that we look at conventional financing and part of my job is to kind of help to develop strategies around financing that may be innovative and creative."

A Tale of Two Statements.

So again, respectfully, Government does require creativity and imagination or we are not going to get out of this mess. Government does require new ideas. As one of the speakers on the other side of the aisle said earlier, it is about adaptability. I entirely agree. We must adapt or perish. Yes, execution is mission-critical, and again I would just go to the Throne Speech itself for a moment. Again with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I quote from the top of page 5: "Any and all services that we provide to the global economy must be viewed from the lens of how we improve the delivery of services . . ." Delivery and execution. Yes, agreed. But it might be the right policies that need to be executed.

Again, Mr. Speaker, "It was the best of times, the worst of times, the age of wisdom, the age of foolishness . . ."

We heard from the first speaker in the batting order for the PLP today that the Throne Speech is the PLP's castle. Let us hope that it is not a castle built on sand. Mr. Speaker, let me start by seizing on what I think is one of the most important elements of the Throne Speech and an area where I would be incredibly supportive of what the Government has said. And for those looking at the Throne Speech, it is at page 3, which is the statement by the Government on health care. This was then followed up today by the Statement from the Minister of Health, a Learned Member of this House, and deservedly so. I would respectfully say with respect to one of the earlier speakers, actually those of us who have taken the trouble to be *learned* do put a lot of effort into it. And I am grateful for the Learned Members of this Chamber.

And I am grateful for what the Honourable Minister of Health had to say because it takes a brave man or indeed in this case a brave woman to admit that a change of direction may be needed. So I think the Government is entirely right to press *pause* on the basic health plan, and I do not criticise in any way the course change. I think this is a chance to get it right. Yes, the Government had described it as a multi-year journey toward universal health care coverage, and yes, we are supportive of that journey. But again it has to be right. The previous iteration, which viewed a sort of government-led unified system, was a tremendously bad idea. But again I am not just playing politics

here. Universal health care is a tremendously good idea. But it has to put patients first. Patients have to be at the centre of what is driving the reform.

We need to bring costs down. We need to rely on private sector professionals, not the government. Because very rarely is the government any good at service delivery. Hence *The Tale of Two Statements*. And the comments by the Premier about execution and the comments by the Minister of Finance about the need for public-private partnerships I very much agree with and commend the Minister for looking at. Because the reality is we do not have much money left. As you learned today in a Statement from the Minister of Finance, our debt is \$3.35 billion. So if we are to have projects to better enhance Bermuda, to try to improve the lot of all of us, we are going to need to find a way to pay for them.

The solution to that payment, as the Minister of Finance has recognised, is not to try to raise more taxes in a declining economy if we can avoid it. And he had not locked himself in; I recognise that. But we do not want to raise taxes in a declining economy. It is not sensible economics. So we are going to have to look at finding others who might be prepared to pay for the projects that we need. Therefore, I commend the Minister of Finance for exploring public-private partnerships. It is a very sensible course of action. And as I will come to at the end of my speech, Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch on how we attract wealthy foreigners to bring their wealth to Bermuda.

Another point that I would like to praise in the Throne Speech, and this is at page 6, is the statement by the Government that it intends to look more closely, and I quote: "During this Session, the Department of Child and Family Services will be strengthened in the area of child safeguarding to reduce the harm, abuse and distress of children on our island."

This has been a long time in coming, Mr. Speaker. I very much hope that that will be a root-and-branch reform of DCSF [Department of Child and Family Services]. It is extremely regrettable . . . and I know I have banged on about this for several years. But it is regrettable that we have not had independent and comprehensive investigation into the allegations of abuse and neglect at DCFS. The bright light of truth needs to be shone on this dirty episode in our community. And I very much hope that going forward the efforts for child safeguarding will be thorough and they will change the way we have been doing business previously in that area. I look forward to seeing the Bill to reform the Children Act as and when it comes to the Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, those are the goods as I see it—

The Speaker: MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, let me just offer a suggestion. I know you are gathered in the Opposition Boardroom there and you are trying to use the larger technology that is in there. Would you happen to have your tablet? Because if you have your government-issued tablet, maybe if you used the audio and just speak to the tablet, it may come through louder for the sake of being able to hear you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, I will give it a try. Right off the phone.

[Pause]

The Speaker: You want to leave the video on from the boardroom; that is fine.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Here we are.

The Speaker: Right. We hear you much clearer now.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay. We will turn the audio off in our boardroom, Mr. Speaker, and I will use the audio on the tablet.

The Speaker: Yes, you can use the video from the boardroom.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Speaker: We are just trying to get you heard because right now for us and the listening audience, we are really not hearing much of what you have to say.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe what I have to say is important. I am grateful to you for making that suggestion, and I hope that the audio is now of a better quality so that what I have to say can be heard.

The Speaker: It is better.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No doubt you will allow a minute or two back on the clock for my benefit, given the intervention.

Mr. Speaker, I had just identified certain elements of the Throne Speech that I felt deserved praise. Certainly, the approach to health care reform, the idea of public-private partnership and the undertaking by the Minister to have child safeguarding with DCFS.

Now I would like to turn to some of the points on which I am slightly more critical, although as I said at the outset of my speech, it is intended to be constructive criticism.

The Throne Speech by any view contained a number of vague promises. It would be very easy when reading the Throne Speech as a whole to pose questions: *Well, how? And with what money?* Mr.

Speaker, anyone can make a promise. It is principled leadership when you make a promise only when you know you can deliver it. And promises should be few and seldom and really should be deliverable. I am not going to repeat what my honourable colleague, MP Richardson, said earlier to the House, which is that perhaps the idea of tackling 31 points would be far better if you just picked 3 and really drilled down on them.

Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns about certain other suggestions in the Throne Speech, and I will touch on them very briefly. But some of these again, the questions I would pose are, *How?* and, *With what money?*

One is the Tynes Bay Facility to be replaced; that is at page 7 of the Throne Speech. We are told today that it would be \$150 million, perhaps, although there was a cheaper option where there might just be some maintenance to it. We are told that it has already started or it will already start. So there is a lack of clarity there.

Mr. Speaker, another point is the Bermuda Tourism Authority [BTA]. That is dealt with at page 8 of the Throne Speech. This is obviously a political football. The OBA created an independent BTA. In my respectful opinion, it was one of the best things the OBA did when they were the Government. They recognised that politicians really are not there as professionals to manage tourism, and they put the management of our Bermuda tourism in the hands of independent professionals. And I think it was the right idea. So on this point I would respectfully say leave it to the professionals.

We heard today I think from the Opposition Leader who quoted the former Tourism Minister who talked about *ripping out the engine of the BTA*. Mr. Speaker, if you rip the engine out, do not be surprised if the car doesn't drive.

Turning to page 5, a little bit back in the Throne Speech, there is also a proposal in respect of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation [BEDC]. Mr. Speaker, the BEDC has been quite a successful vehicle. And what it primarily does is [IN-AUDIBLE] small and medium-size businesses. It is pursuing a goal of entrepreneurialism. And it is a giving a hand up to those who are trying to make their lives better. And, Mr. Speaker, I think those of us on both sides of the aisle agree that this is a good thing. Therefore, using the old adage, *if it ain't broke, don't fix it*, I am concerned that we would now take the concept of the BEDC and pivot it toward the development of residential construction. To me, that sounds foolhardy. "It was an age of wisdom; it was an age of foolishness".

Mr. Speaker, we also hear from this Throne Speech that there may be constitutional changes suggested to the United Kingdom. I think it is regrettable that we have not heard what those constitutional changes might be. I think if you are going to undertake

significant changes to the structure of the Island, you might as well have the courage to say what those changes are.

What are they?

Another concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is in respect to page 7 of the Throne Speech, and that is in respect of the Public Access to Information. This has been something that has been very good for Bermuda's governance on both sides of the aisle, no matter which party was in Government. Letting the light of day into governmental decisions is a good thing. Having to justify, if you are in Government, why you are doing what you are doing, is a good thing because it leads to greater clarity of thought, and your actions need to be defended. And if you are right, you should not be afraid to defend your actions. And any curtailing of the Public Access to Information is not a good thing, in my respectful submission. And I hope that when the Government does its restructure, this is not going to be a fig leaf for curtailing access to information.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the environment, we have seen a complete U-turn on shoreside. That is possibly no bad thing. In a statement made to the House today, and I quote, we should "put fishers at the centre to best control . . ." And I agree with that. You cannot give people something they do not want and then expect them to be pleased about it. The example was given by the Opposition Leader last Friday after the Throne Speech about why would a fisherman come all the way around the western part of the Island and head over to St. George's? We now learn today that in fact this might move to the West End. Anyway, I am glad to see that something that the Opposition is saying is being listened to.

I note also on page 4 of the Throne Speech there is this statement talking about this sandbox facilitating developers to renewable energy to come and test their products in Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, that is potentially a good idea. It depends on who they are, how much money they have, and what they do. But in theory it is a good idea. But, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech then goes on to say "This legislation will lay the groundwork for additional investment in Bermuda whose innovation can reduce the cost of electricity for local consumers."

What?

Because some people want to come in and test technology, that is going to reduce the cost of electricity for local consumers? Well, maybe, someday, somehow, but it is hard to see how that is really going to happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not in my brief, but I want to say something very quickly about education. And I apologise because education deserves more than a very quick few words. At a very high level, Mr. Speaker, my suggestion would be that our schools will get better if the people who run the schools are given greater autonomy and accountability. And if you want

to fix the problem with our schools it is not about building new buildings, it is about bringing together the parents, the principals, the teachers and the children, and about the parents and principals and teachers having a greater say in what happens in a child's education.

It was observed by the Opposition Leader in his speech that not much was said about the education authority. And that is regrettable because it seemed to be the case under this present Minister that our suggestions and his suggestions of the importance of an education authority were coming together in a bipartisan way. And we were supportive of his suggestions to this Honourable House that we were going to see more about an education authority. We very much hope that this is the case and remains the case.

Still on education, Mr. Speaker, just looking at today's reality and the reality of COVID-19, our children have suffered three school years of, potentially, irreparable harm and damage by interrupted learning. That is not the fault of the Government, and that is not the fault of the Opposition. And it is COVID-19 that is to blame. But together the Government and we the Opposition should at least look to see how this can be addressed and remediated. I praise the Education Minister for his efforts to get our kids back in school, but we need all our kids back in school on a regular basis.

And I would respectfully suggest that we need to look afresh at the concept of close contact in our schools because if one student tests positive, and potentially falsely tests positive, we cannot have everyone going back into quarantine. We need to get out of the morass and move forward. And I think that viral testing is—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will certainly pause for clarification.

The Speaker: Just a minute.

Would you like a point of order?

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will take a point of clarification.

POINT OF ORDER *[Misleading]*

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: It is a point of order. It is probably a point of clarification for that Member. I do believe he is unintentionally misleading the House.

If he had tuned into my press conference on Tuesday where we spoke about the revised quarantine facility that is currently in place, currently now there is a new definition for close contact and casual contact when currently only close contacts are asked to quarantine from school and casual contacts are

treated differently. And that has been in place since—for about a week and a bit, almost two weeks now. It has affected both a public . . . two public schools and a private school have benefited from that new policy.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to hear that. And I appreciate the clarification. And I was just about to say before the clarification that the introduction of the lateral flow testing was a very good thing and a very good idea.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The Speaker: Just under eight minutes left.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Right. I will pick up the pace.

Mr. Speaker, just quickly moving to the issue of crime, I think all of Bermuda has been rather shocked at the recent state of multiple shootings, stabbings, and home invasions. And it really must make us stop and ask, *Is this who we have become?* And this is the responsibility of all of us. My honourable colleague, Jarion Richardson, MP, spoke very passionately and powerfully about this earlier, and I agree with his words and would echo them.

I would also commend the police for their efforts because it is very easy to look for a scapegoat when the horrific, horrible things happen on our Island. And I think the police have responded very swiftly and very well. And let us hope that together, as a community, we can bring this to an end, because this must stop, Mr. Speaker. And in relation to a recent op-ed by a former PLP MP, let me say this. It must stop on Front Street, and it must stop on Court Street, and no distinction can be drawn. It must stop now because this affects all of us, the whole community, and we must come together to do what we can and work together to do what we can.

Mr. Speaker, turning now to the idea of the Economic Recovery Plan, some of those on my side who have spoken already have observed that perhaps 31 points is biting off more than one can chew. I proposed earlier in the week and would repeat again now to this Honourable House what I see as the three most important high-level points if we are to try to get out of the difficulties in which we find ourselves. Difficulties which I have fairly recognised are not simply the making of this Government but are very much the making of COVID-19 as well.

My three suggestions are not rocket science. They are not even what the Premier might call "creative new ideas that are unneeded." They are these: We need real immigration reform, and it must be comprehensive. We welcomed the reform that the Honourable Minister Jason Hayward brought to this House. We supported it. But we observed that it did not go far enough, and we need to reconcile that. And I also agree, Mr. Speaker, with what the Deputy Speaker said earlier, that the topic of immigration is a

hot topic with some serious historic concerns. And he is right that it is emotive, and everyone must understand that it is emotive. But also we must look and do the right thing if we are not to sink beneath the waves.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we need inward investment of foreign capital. Circulating the same dollar from one to the next to the next, within the confines of this Island, is not going to work. We have to grow the pie. And if we are going to grow the pie, where is the money coming from? Because taxing those of us who are still here, as people leave, is not the idea. That will make more people leave, which would be foolhardy.

"It was an age of foolishness". We must try to persuade people to come to our Island to be wealth generators and job creators. And in order to do that they must feel welcomed. And with the greatest of respect to the Minister of Labour, there is a difference between the ability to create jobs on this Island now and the ability to create jobs on this Island five years ago. And I think he recognises that. And if he doesn't, I would invite him to think again.

Mr. Speaker, my third argument, again, is not complicated. It is that we need to reduce the cost of government. And that does not mean getting rid of public sector workers, but it means looking at what we are spending as a whole and trying to rein that in. And again, in my observations earlier in my speech to the House tonight I was commending the Minister of Finance because he is doing a tough job right now. But we do need to look at the spending costs of government. Government has had 20 years in the hot seat and unfortunately when times were good, it seemed okay to spend and spend. But we recognise that what is needed now is invest, invest, and invest. And if that investment cannot come from within, we must look to without.

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, Throne Speeches permit lofty language, and they make overarching statements. So let me make one. We absolutely need to see greater social equity and justice on our Island. We need to feel that we are one community—not an Island with many communities. And if we are going to do that, we desperately need economic prosperity. It is not easy to achieve that, and we will only achieve it if we work together.

I, too, was most struck by a statement in the Throne Speech, as one of the other speakers was earlier, in fact two, I think. It was the statement in the third paragraph, page 1. It says this: "Changes that were deferred have now become imperative for survival." That is a statement about which we can agree.

I am not going to take a cheap shot about who deferred them or have that argument. I am just going to agree that this statement is right and we need to move now. And we need to "execute," to use the Premier's words, or "deliver" (to use my own) the right ideas, because the wrong ones will put us even further into the hole. And we need the delivery of the right ideas now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

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

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

The Speaker: Minister of Education, you have your 30 minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, we are at that time of the year again. The Government gave its Throne Speech detailing what they plan to accomplish in the next legislative year and the Opposition gave their Reply that should speak to what they agree with, disagree with, and what they would actually do better. I do believe that this concept could work if it is actually done. But unfortunately, this year once again we were treated to a document that is lightweight [and] devoid of ideas. Error filled is probably the best way that I could say it. And [it] really just continued to highlight, you know, [to] the people of Bermuda the blundering irrelevance about the Opposition in the current way they are operating and how disconnected they are from the Bermudian people, Mr. Speaker.

I am sorry but, you know, I am trying my very best to say something, to find the nuggets of joy in this, but I just . . . I just can't.

As the Minister of Education, I really do want to focus on education because interestingly there were three pages dedicated to education from the Opposition. And you know, Mr. Speaker, there was something that was once said to me. It goes like this. *In politics, by the time you are tired of saying it, people are probably just starting to hear it.* And so, Mr. Speaker, time and time again, whenever the current OBA leader speaks—and how I would like to refer to him as, thankfully, the last-ever OBA Education Minister—that saying comes to mind.

I myself would never get tired of touting the efforts of our reform team and the things that they have been doing over the last two-plus years. But no matter how tone-deaf the One Bermuda Alliance is about the reforms and what is going on, surely the public deserves an Opposition who can speak as if they are actually paying attention to what is happening to education so that they can be more informative, so they can be more helpful, so that they can give suggestions that are even really suggestions. They [could] give suggestions. Right now they are giving suggestions that are not even really suggestions. They need to be in a position where they are giving things that can be used by us, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I don't know if they do this deliberately or if it is just the way they are, but I just get the feeling sometimes that there are some people in the Opposi-

tion who just do not want education to succeed. I have lost count of the amount of times that I stood up in the House and said—

The Speaker: Member, be mindful—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Be mindful that all Members come to this House with proper intentions to do best for those who elected them to be here. So keep that at a forefront of how we conduct ourselves during—

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

The Speaker: —this session in the House.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I will be guided—

The Speaker: Your view of the issue may be different from that of the other Members, but that does not mean that they do not come with the same positive approach to try to find . . . and represent those who put them here.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will be guided by you as I continue on.

As I was saying, Bermuda is too small to fail education. We all need to be pulling in the same direction if we want to see this work as it should work.

Mr. Speaker, I have continuously extended my hand, invited the Opposition Members to take place and be updated on a regular basis of what is going on within Education, whenever we have workshops, whenever they could sign up for things, whenever. I have even invited them to come and meet with me on a regular basis so that I can keep them updated. Unfortunately, seldom are these opportunities taken up, Mr. Speaker. But we still continue to find certain Members asking the same questions that have already been answered, whether it is in the public sphere, whether it is by press conference, press release, things that are happening in school. So, if they continue to not want to engage, they will continue to make statements that are just not true.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that education is the key to every country's success. And why is that, Mr. Speaker? Public education is the only education system in a country that is comprehensive. This is no knock on our private school entities because they provide a service that people are asking for. But public education is the only one that is comprehensive and deals with every and any sort of student that comes through our door. So this is why it has to work. It has to have the support of everyone in Bermuda in order for it to work.

But I know that COVID-19 has done some things to education reform and it has not allowed us to

move as quickly as we want to, but, Mr. Speaker, we have made steady progress. And this is why I was so surprised at what I read today, what I listened to today. So Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me to look at page 13 of the Throne Speech Reply. There were three things that were said in there that I really want to address.

The Speaker: You may, yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, if you permit me I can quote these three things from the Throne Speech Reply.

The Speaker: Yes, you may.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: One quote was, "We were also surprised to learn that the first two signature senior schools are the Berkeley Institute and the Cedarbridge *[sic]* Academy."

The second quote, Mr. Speaker, was, "What will the curriculum for these specialized subjects look like? Where will we source the teaching professionals to teach the new signature curriculum?"

And the third quote, Mr. Speaker, "While on the subject of the Signature Senior School curriculum, why has one of our primary industries . . . not been addressed? How are we going to address the Tourism, Restaurant and Retail Industries?"

Well, Mr. Speaker, as Minister in the last two years I have spent hundreds of hours in these sessions. We have released about 10 or 12 press releases in the last two years. Countless Ministerial Statements and press conferences have been had addressing these exact same topics. In fact, Mr. Speaker, three days ago, on Tuesday, I held a press conference that specifically addressed these three topics. But yet again, I am simply baffled at the Opposition Leader's Throne Speech [Reply] direction.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to try and break this down so that hopefully some Members on the other side can comprehend where we are. And I still invite them to be a part of the solution. And now if you permit me, I will take us through a quick timeline of some important things that have happened in the last year plus, Mr. Speaker.

In March 2020, we announced the start of system transformation and the Learning First programme.

In October 2020, a recruitment process was done to recruit school design teams. Mr. Speaker, 175 people applied. This was an open application process, but it was not an easy one. Anyone who wanted to be part of this team, they couldn't, just send in their name and their email address. They sent in their name and their information. They had to explain why they wanted to be a part of it. And we were delightfully surprised at how many people sent in their applications. What we ended up with was a core team of 54 persons, Mr.

Speaker. Sixteen of them were teachers. Twelve were community and cultural members. Nine were school leaders; nine were members with school system experience; six were parents, and two were industry partners.

Mr. Speaker, this was probably the most surprising thing ever to me when I read the [Reply to the] Throne Speech. In March of this year we passed the Education Amendment Act in this very House. The sole purpose of that Act was (1) to provide the pathway to phase out middle school and return to a two-tiered system; and (2) to create signature schools at CedarBridge Academy and the Berkeley Institute to open in September 2022.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we passed legislation in this House that said if we pass this we will be able to introduce signature schools in 2022. Mr. Speaker, that legislation spoke to four signatures that we had discussed at that time. Those four signatures were tourism, finance, insurance and trade. What do you know! We passed legislation to say we were going to have signature schools in September 2022. And it also included tourism, what we wanted with signatures. But, Mr. Speaker, I move on.

In April 2021, after that legislation was passed, featuring the results of the Future World of Work [Bermuda], which took almost a year to do, Mr. Speaker . . . and for those who had not been paying attention, because it seems to be some of them, the Future World of Work [Bermuda] was a comprehensive study that was taking place using our local educators, our local business community, the Department of Workforce Development, the Bermuda College and many, many others who have an idea of what Bermuda will look like and what Bermuda's needs will be in the coming year.

The Bermuda Future World of Work was used to come up with 11 different signature subjects that we wanted to have within our schools. But we then held sessions over the course of just over a month with the general public as we convened all along to have them opine on these and fine-tune those signature subjects that we came up with. Ironically, Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurship was one of them. That was the 11th one. Based on the feedback that we got, entrepreneurship would now form part of the curriculum from primary through senior school. And so that left us with 10 signatures, those being STEM, Mr. Speaker, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math; climate, environment, agriculture, and resources; health and social care; community and social investment; arts and culture; education services; sports and leisure management; financial and insurance services; hospitality and tourism; and the trades and professions. And, Mr. Speaker, we all know, everybody keeps talking about, *Where is the trades going to come back in?* Well, they are coming.

So, Mr. Speaker, moving on, in May 2021, it was announced that CedarBridge and Berkeley had

selected the signatures that suit their current school infrastructure. Of course, Mr. Speaker, as established senior schools and with our commitment to consult and have everyone who is involved in these programmes can ever say that those schools came back and selected the ones they felt were better suited for the infrastructure they had. As we move forward with the introduction of further signature schools in the coming years, we will be able to just assign them whatever signatures they want because they will be starting from scratch. But also during this time in May we also outlined how we would get from May 2021 through December 2022 in the introduction of signature schools.

Mr. Speaker, again, I make reference to the statement I made just three days ago that talked about signature schools with further updates on that and everything else that is going on in Education. And, Mr. Speaker, as I spoke earlier about inviting all of my colleagues to participate in helping shape what our school curriculum will look like, what the teachers will be learning and all of that, we will be holding prototyping sessions for the signature school curriculum so that the general public, parents, [and] students can get an opportunity to see what is being worked on by the system design teams who have been working extremely hard since earlier this year to design what these systems will look like and what sorts of things teachers will have to have under their belt in order to be successful in that.

There is still time for Members of the Opposition to sign off, Mr. Speaker. Go to the Ministry www.moed.bm, click on the sign-up alert button, and we will try and get you into one of the sessions that you can see first-hand what it is that these systems will be doing and how they will be taught.

Mr. Speaker, we have been consulting exhaustively to move education forward. The Learning First programme has been in existence for over two years. Two years, Mr. Speaker! They have been working hard to redesign our system, and as we have always said, it is not just about structural changes to the building. That is part of our reform, but that is not the be-all and end-all. As a matter of fact, that is probably even less than 50 per cent of what needs to be done. What needs to be done is collaborative co-designing of curriculum with our educators so they are capable of performing in this new system.

We have the public . . . we have our students also giving input on how we redesign our system, Mr. Speaker, because this is a system for Bermuda by Bermuda. What we want is people to stop . . . we want people who will send us constant videos and constant articles about what is happening in Thailand and Switzerland and Finland and the like . . . we want smaller island countries to be looking at Bermuda and saying, *We want to do what they are doing.* That is what we want our system to be—by Bermuda for Bermuda so it

specifically addresses the concerns that Bermudians have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moving back to the Throne Speech Reply, I want to quote from page 14, another gem that I find very, very difficult to take comfort in. And it says, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: "In the 21st Century, it is time to develop a curriculum that results in an overarching diploma which has academic, vocational, and extra-curricular components and features. A diploma that will prepare our young people for their rightful places in the real world and make them more marketable and employable in the global arena."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what signature programmes within our schools are supposed to do. The only problem is we announced this maybe two years ago. But that is what we want our children to be. So, just for clarification, for those who just had not heard what we have been saying for the last year-and-a-half-plus, all students will attend our senior schools and do everything that they need to do to obtain their school leaving diploma, as they do now, but with a revised curriculum. They will spend 30 per cent of their time on their chosen signature.

Mr. Speaker, this will present our children with the opportunity to do exactly what the Opposition's Throne Speech [Reply] is saying that we need to be doing—prepare them to be work-ready right from high school, accelerated into the workforce, prepared for further study and ready to be great citizens of this Island home we call Bermuda.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess we do agree on that, although the Member either did not know, or did not realise, or had forgotten that this was the purpose of educational reform as announced two years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Opposition is not being disingenuous in the way they are speaking. They just do not know, because some people just have not been paying attention. But they could learn a lot, Mr. Speaker, through our Learning First newsletter. They could sign up for it. They could participate in the prototype. Or, Mr. Speaker, they could just start [INAUDIBLE]. And if they did that, Mr. Speaker, they would have those answers to the questions they posed. They would not come here with the statements that were made today that, you know, *where will instructors come from*, or *what the curriculum will be*, because they would already know what we are doing to get to that point, Mr. Speaker.

But, personally, I view as an insult to our quite capable educators what has been said by the Opposition Leader on numerous occasions about *where will the instructors come from*? Is it that he just does not believe that we have the skill and knowledge amongst our ranks now that when given the opportunities to retool and use professional development opportunities they are still not capable of being a part of educational reform? Mr. Speaker, those hardworking men and women surely cannot listen to that and feel that they are being supported by the Opposition. We have 60-

plus member teams working at both of our senior schools right now designing what our curriculum will look like moving forward in conjunction with Learning First. They are co-designing the curriculum and they are discussing what professional development is needed for our signature programme to succeed.

But, yes, Mr. Speaker, we will have the staff skilled up and doing exactly what needs to be done. We will have the facility that needs to be in place to do what needs to be done. And we will not fail our children in providing them with the opportunity to succeed in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, moving on with the Opposition Leader's Throne Speech Reply, he mentioned words about the Authority, and the speaker that spoke before me talked about the Authority as well. Those quotes can be found on page 15 of the Throne Speech Reply. And, Mr. Speaker, instead of quoting what came out of the Throne Speech Reply I want you to permit me to quote the exact words I said on Tuesday when it came to the education authority.

"The Governance Structure and Accountability Team consists of members from the Board of Education, the Ministry and Department of Education, Bermuda First and Innovation Unit. Their focus is on creating an Education Authority for overseeing public education to lead all aspects of performance and accountability in public education. Much work has been done in this area, and their initial report will be released in the coming months."

Yes, Mr. Speaker, they have been hard at work since January of this year. And we will have a report. Their initial report is due to me very shortly. So, again, Mr. Speaker, listening is fundamental. We cannot have a Throne Speech [Reply] asking *What is happening with the education authority?* when there was a statement three days earlier that actually talked about it, not to mention the statements that have been made all year long about where they are, who is working on the Authority, and what it is that they are performing and when we expect to have them to release something.

Mr. Speaker, my last comment on the Throne Speech [Reply] is something that the Opposition Leader mentioned. And it is quite serious. We do have to look out for the well-being of our children and our parents, especially with COVID-19 affecting them in ways that has never been experienced before. But Mr. Speaker, I draw the Opposition Leader's attention to a biweekly online show that was launched by the Ministry of Education, which is hosted by myself and our DC officer. I only speak to this because I want to draw the Opposition Leader's attention to the episode of October 7.

On October 7, that episode was specifically about discussing what we already have in place and put in place to help our students manage their emotional well-being and mental health. School Psychologist Dr. Lana Talbot and School Counsellor, Mr. Ty-

rone McHardy joined us and provided a very enlightening and very informative update on what has been happening in our schools and what is still happening in our schools.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this episode was specifically to address the people who were asking questions like what was asked today about what is going on in our schools to help our students. So, that episode . . . because we do them online, Mr. Speaker, anybody can go back and watch them again. So I invite the Opposition Leader to head to our Ministry of Education Facebook page, CITV page, or whatever page he wants. He will be able to actually see that episode and see what exactly is being done to help our students and our parents cope since COVID-19 arrived on our shores, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while I am disappointed with the OBA's education reply, I am sure there are hundreds of hardworking educators, parents, students and members of the public who have dedicated their time and energy to contribute to education reform over the last two years [who] are disappointed as well. It almost feels like their efforts have been completely ignored by the One Bermuda Alliance, and certainly that cannot be right, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 has knocked our Island for a loop, Mr. Speaker. But we must continue to forge ahead. I was shocked when the Opposition Leader said last Friday, *Why are we still moving ahead with education reform when we should be concerning ourselves with COVID-19?* I do not know why he said that, Mr. Speaker, but he did.

This PLP Government has dedicated itself to focusing on the recovery of our Island both economically and psychologically, bringing health care reform to fruition and continuing to reform our education system because, Mr. Speaker, as we have stated for the last four years, we have a responsibility to ensure that we educate our students so that they can lead personally and professionally, compete locally, and contribute globally. Mr. Speaker, we will transform education by providing a public school system that produces students equipped for the vocational, academic and business career of their choosing. We are on the way. There is nothing that can stop this train from moving despite the naysayers, despite the people who are not even paying attention and just watching the train roll by them.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work to be done. I will continue to invite all, including the Opposition, to join us as we move forward. With or without them, we will continue to make the improvements and changes necessary to bring education reform for what is best and required every day for a better, fairer and stronger education system for our children and Bermuda's future.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to fail. We will not fail. And I encourage the Opposition to just stop

making empty statements and come on board and be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I hear two voices.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Cannonier?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes, you have your 30 minutes.

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

I think I would like to just first start off by [agreeing with] the sentiments given earlier by other Members of Parliament. Thank you to all of the emergency service workers. Thank you to those within government civil service who have contributed to helping us to get through a very trying time since COVID-19 struck our shores and of course affected the whole world. I cannot say enough about what has taken place as far as people's endless amount of time that has been dedicated to ensuring that Bermudians are as safe as possible.

We are in no way out of the woods. Certainly, as we see COVID-19 strengthening in areas like Germany, Poland and throughout Europe, we know that in order for us to survive as an economy it is important that our shores be open so that we can invite that investment into the country. Without it . . . we already know and have seen through COVID-19 that it is devastating to us.

One of the passions that I have had from day one as an entrepreneur myself is that local businesses here in Bermuda continue to struggle. We have seen through circumstances [INAUDIBLE] that many of our local businesses have not found a way forward. And it concerns me that when solutions or ideas are put on the table we continue, year after year—for whatever reasons, through bureaucracy or through political fighting—not to continue to move with swiftness to ensure that we put these solutions in place for their longevity and for their survival at this point in time.

So, when I hear some of the bantering going back and forth . . . and here we are once again, another Throne Speech, another Throne Speech Reply, and essentially seeing most times nothing new under the sun. But as a bureaucracy we have found a way to lengthen out the solutions to the challenges that we have. And what is more concerning to me is that when

those solutions are being given from the industries themselves, for some reason as legislators we are way too long in getting the solutions to the tables. And it is not just businesses that are affected, but the families who are involved in these businesses are extremely affected by the fact that they lose revenue and the ability to survive.

Every day we hear on the street right now that the cost of living is too high, and the cost of doing business is too high. Now, I am just talking about the local sector right now. And I will get to foreign investment and spikes. But the challenge that we have is when local businesses are giving solutions we are not moving swiftly enough to get those solutions to the table. And then when COVID-19 comes along we move with swiftness because we have got to get things done and we can see the immediate results. But when local businesses are telling us what the challenges are that they are having, we are still moving very slowly to get these solutions done.

And so my colleague before me, Mr. Scott [Pearman], said that we must move now. I have been on the bandwagon for many years now. We need to get foreign direct investment into the Island. Our population continues to decline. Our birth rate . . . you might as well say that it is at a negative rate. We are not growing as a population. And in order for us to sustain the standard of living that we have, in order for us to sustain the businesses that we have, we have got to address the issue of getting more people into the Island and more investment into the Island. Quite frankly, I believe that we need to have at least 10,000 more people on the Island in order to generate enough revenue to keep the businesses that have survived thus far in business. Now quite frankly I have not seen much in the Throne Speech that is going to make that happen.

In the Reply to the Throne Speech one of the things that I have been crying for over and over and over is that the local businesses have told us that they have a cash flow problem. It makes no sense for them to go to the bank. And we have heard it through the Throne Speech, you know, going to banks and getting loans, charities and the likes. Who is going to loan money right now when they cannot pay you back? So I understand the concept and the idea that we want to go to the banks and loan money, but it is at the very institutions that we are talking about going to to get money where it takes six months to get a bank account open. So why in the world would we believe that we are going to go in and get a loan?

Do you know how long it takes to get a loan in Bermuda right now? Your arm is asked for, your leg is asked for, your house is asked for, your family's income is asked for and you are trying to go and get a loan, and it is going to take you forever. So I do not see anything right now, quite frankly, in the Throne Speech that is going to address the main issues at hand right now.

Now, let me qualify this by saying, first, I do want to thank Minister Jason Hayward. He did qualify some things within his Ministry. It was very good to listen to some of those. Minister Roban, the same. [He] qualified some of those things that were not in the Throne Speech. And also the Minister of Education did the same thing, albeit, in my opinion with a bit of attitude. But, hey, he gave some interesting information.

The challenge as we go forward is that this Government has got to figure out how to stimulate the economy. Hope is dashed right now. I am talking to people, and people who read the Throne Speech every year just cannot be bothered. And I am not saying that it is because, you know, the PLP has done all this wrong. I am saying that people are not motivated anymore. And the Throne Speech, quite frankly, has not motivated anyone, in my opinion, to feel that we are on the right track and the right trajectory to improve the plight of our people. And the struggle right now is real. The OBA knows that struggle because when it became Government in 2012, it was faced with some dark and dire situations economically.

This Government has spoken about social issues. It has spoken about economic issues. But in 2021 we are still wrestling with the issue that many people believe this Government came in on, [which was] the mandate of reducing the cost of living. I see nothing but a hint that we are going to get energy costs down.

And as my colleague said, it is a very confusing paragraph because it says that it is going to reduce this by fuel storage, or something to that effect. I am interested in hearing a little more about that and how it is going to work. Not too many people know that the fuel companies here have at least three months of fuel, about, in their storage tanks or vats. We have a problem with ships not being able to get to us. We can, at least for that period of time, continue on generating power so that people can get on with work throughout the Island. So I am still not clear on that particular statement and how that is going to work and how that is going to reduce the cost of energy in Bermuda. But we are still in a state whereby we cannot see clearly how the cost of living for the average Bermudian is going to go down.

And then it becomes even more complicated, Mr. Speaker, by the fact that COVID-19 hits. Something else is coming. Maybe it is [worse than] COVID-19. I don't know. But we have got to move now. And with our population growth [being] the way that it is, we have got some challenges ahead of us. And we keep talking about these challenges, but no one really truly is seeing a clear path and hearing it explained clearly as to how we are going to get to the point whereby we can be comfortable.

Our standard of living is being eaten away every day. The middle class has become low income. And I am reflecting on a comment that was made by

the first speaker, the Honourable Lawrence Scott, when he said . . . it is interesting, the quote that he made. And I wrote it down here. I have got to find it. He mentioned that former Premier Alex Scott mentioned that *the haves will always have (something to this effect); but the have-nots need to have more*. And I found that a bit rich because I think the most famous quote that I remember from Premier Alex Scott was *on budget and on time*, concerning the Berkeley Institute school—which did not come in on time and did not come in on budget. That is the famous quote that I recall from the former Premier. Only to have one of our local businesses go out of business who I think that some of the Government MPs who are still involved today in this Government thought that some of the companies that were involved could have resolved the issue.

So, you know, we have this going back and forth. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I love a good debate. But if we are going to change the trajectory of where we are going politically, and to have the opening one hour, a statement made, that spends half the speech (in my opinion) on *poor PLP, what the UBP and what the UBP did, and what the OBA did not do*, and then halfway through the speech, he says, *I digress. I don't want to go that way*. And then the very second sentence after that, he goes back to the same thing. That is how we started out this debate today.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER [Misleading]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: The Honourable Member is misleading the House for two things. One thing, the quote is incorrect. It is: The haves can continue to have and the have-nots need to have more.

The other point of order is that the Honourable Member is making it sound like, it is not, *Oh, poor PLP*; it is about changing mind-sets. The old mind-set of yesteryear and the status quo must change in order for us to move Bermuda forward.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Honourable Member.

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

I have no clue why he even said that at all. But he likes to talk so we will just let him continue to talk.

It is important, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Stick to your points. Stick to your points.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

It is important that we get back to the concerns that Bermudians have. And those concerns in my opinion are not being addressed in any substantive way in this Throne Speech. And those concerns are the cost of living and the cost of doing business.

Now, I give credit to the Minister Jason Hayward. He laid out what these foreign investment and direct investment firms and private equity funds and companies are looking for, and individuals for that matter, what they are looking for in a jurisdiction. But the one thing that he left out of that was the cost of doing business.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that in the field that I find myself in, there is a lot of money out there. And until we start addressing the real issues that Bermuda is facing, and until we start speaking the language that these foreign investment companies want to hear, we are not going to get them here. And that is what we are experiencing. So there are entities out there right now with billions of dollars to invest. Right now, during the midst of COVID-19, we have innovation like you have never seen before knocking on the door when it comes to energy and the like, for opportunities to come to a place like Bermuda to put in recycling and the likes, to dismantle the incinerator that we have, so that we do not have all that soot going over the roofs in the neighbourhood there. There is innovation there right now and there are people with ideas and with money, they can move in right now.

The Honourable Member, MP Derrick [Burgess], said that the best Finance Minister is the current one. I think there are many who might argue that, but I do not envy the position that he is in right now. It is a tough one. And I think we all acknowledge the challenge that he has as we move forward. But one of the challenges that all of us as MPs have, and more importantly this Government has, is that it almost sounds as if from Throne Speech to Throne Speech what we are doing is legislation, legislation, legislation. We will pass legislation, legislation and more legislation. Yet the real issues that we are facing when it comes to thriving here—getting the investment here, cost of living and the cost of doing business—are not being addressed in any substantial way. Otherwise, the community would feel it.

But we can already see, when we looked at the Reply to the Throne Speech, where the Honourable Opposition Leader . . . and I must give him credit for saying this here, *Government should be the enabler. Government should not be the solutions provider*. And it almost feels sometimes as if . . . and we have seen just recently with the debacle with the post office. It appears as if Government now is in competition with the very people who are hiring Bermudians. And these companies are local companies. And so somehow and in some way, we have got to get across to the public that Government is not trying to wrestle

against the very local businesses that are here, but it is trying to be an enabler.

So we cannot on one hand be seen to be, as the Honourable Lawrence Scott said, taking food out of people's mouths and accusing us of that when people feel that they are doing the exact same thing. This has got to be something that we address and understand that it is real. Bermudians are suffering. And the fundamentals of that are what I said, those two things: The cost of living and the cost of doing business.

Bermudians have thrived over entrepreneurship. That no longer is the case. Now we have a declining population in my estimation and a low birth rate as you look at it. We are in serious trouble. And COVID-19 exemplified more so the challenges that we already have, Mr. Speaker. That we already have! A lot of solutions have already been talked about tonight. So for any Member to say that the Opposition has not put any solutions forward is just being antagonistic, in my opinion, not really adding anything to the equation.

I have thanked Members thus far who have spoken in ministries. Some have explained more because the Throne Speech is, quite frankly, very light when explaining exactly what this Government is trying to do. So I am hoping that as we move forward, and as I look at my notes, that we are going to find a way forward.

Now, one of the pressing things that I see happening right now, and my colleagues have talked about it, [is] domestic violence, the wild things that they see on the street—we are now going into restaurants—and, quite frankly, Bermudians killing Bermudians. We have got local businesses who are screaming for help. And bureaucracy, quite frankly . . . because many times governments have solutions, but bureaucracy is killing [it]. It is kind of like, Mr. Speaker, we know that someone is drowning. We can see them in the water and they are drowning. And through the process of it all, somebody says, *Hey, listen guys, Bermudians are drowning over here. We have got to do something about it.*

And what the bureaucracy does is this: It says, *Okay, well, let's have a meeting so we can discuss what we should do to help this person and these people who were drowning.* So we have these meetings. A month goes by, two months go by.

And then the committee says, *Well, we better get experts in so we can resolve the issue and get it done.* Another couple of months go by. And finally we get to people putting solutions on the table.

One person says, *Well, look, you know, while they are drowning, let's put a metal pipe down with air in it so they can breathe through that until we figure out how to pull them out of the water.*

And another person says, *Well, maybe we should just give them a stick and just pull them out.*

Another person says, *Well, let's give them a plastic pipe they can breathe through and until we can figure it out, and we will get them out of the water.*

Valuable time has been lost. And this Government and this Opposition can no longer continue on stalling the solutions that are going to resolve the issues we have. We must move now. Now! And that is what this whole process is about, the Throne Speech and the Throne Speech Reply.

Now I had intentions of ripping apart the first speaker who had an hour because I can't believe some of the things that were said. But I think the public [has] heard enough of that. For the first speaker to come out and address the public on the Throne Speech Reply in that manner, quite frankly, just doesn't make any sense. And for the rest of his colleagues to say, *Oh, well, you know, the Opposition is not offering any demonstrable solutions; all they do is complain . . .* when the very first speech that was given drove us back into what the UBP did, what the OBA didn't do, and then we have a point of order on a quote which I basically paraphrased which said the exact same thing.

Are we really serious here? What I said was the exact same thing he said with a few different words. It meant the same thing. And that is what I mean by bureaucracy. Why are you wasting my time in the House of Assembly with a point of order like that? Are you really serious?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is actually trying to make the people of Bermuda believe he actually cares about them. If he did, he would not have entered into the—

The Speaker: Minister—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: —or allowed his team to enter into the—

The Speaker: Minister—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: —contract—

The Speaker: Minister—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: —for the airport.

The Speaker: Minister, let me just clarify.

You have a right to express your point. Everybody does. But we are not going to do it in a way where we are demeaning people. And to say that he is trying to fool people into thinking he cares, that is not acceptable. We are not having those tones this time around.

You need to just withdraw that please and say what you are going to say in another manner but without saying that somebody is trying to hoodwink somebody to feeling a certain way.

You have a bigger vocabulary than that. So I am calling on you to use a better vocabulary.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: All right, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw that and say that the Honourable Member is trying to mislead the House by trying to rewrite history as though his Government did not add close to \$2 billion of financial risk to the people of this country.

The Speaker: That is a better way of saying it. Thank you.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think I have done enough in the past to point out, many of the overages. I have pointed out one that quite frankly fell under former Premier Alex Scott (he brought the name up), where we had overages. And that is just one of many where local businesses, and not just local businesses, Black businesses were put out of business over the very issue that I talked about.

So if we want to go into depth about many of the Black local businesses that went out of business under the PLP Government, I am more than glad to have that debate, because I saw more [Black] local businesses go out under a PLP Government than any other Government.

So, I say this to say that—

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: The Honourable Member is trying to mislead the House by having people forget that under the UBP more Blacks lost their homes and businesses due to the early calling in of the mortgages and the like because they did not support their political outlook, or their political side.

The Speaker: Thanks for your comment.
Continue.

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

Well, I would encourage the Honourable Member if he thinks that I don't know that, and that I

have never felt that before, then he is mistaken. I feel the same pain as a Black man as he has felt. So, if he wants to talk about the issues of this country that Black people have faced, I am more than willing, again, to have that conversation, because I can assure you that we have been the worst enemies to ourselves than anybody else. And that is clear throughout our history.

So if we want to move forward, as I said, we need to move now. And I want to hear how we are addressing those legacy issues. Yes, we may be putting legislation in place, but guess what? The banks are still there. Go get a loan. You cannot get one. And if you do, it is going to take you eight months. Guess what? Your business is gone. So how are you addressing that?

And let me be clear about this here. One of the main banks that is causing the problem here was brought in under a PLP Government. And we are still facing these issues. So, as I said, Mr. Speaker, I am more than willing to have that debate, for sure! And if we have to have something put in place for that to happen, let's do it, because I am one of those Black business owners struggling to survive, just like others who are out there.

Do you want me to name them? They are out there. And they are challenging you as a Government to do something now about their plight because they will be extinct. Black-owned businesses will be extinct. The very ones who have been thriving, and we thought were doing well are now in trouble. And I am talking to them because we are colleagues.

So, we got to find a way to move. We got to find a way to move! And I love the idea of reducing and doing away with paying duty up front, which I have been saying for years. Take it away, because cash flow is paramount right now. And these local businesses, whether they be Black or white, need that cash flow. They do not have it because we do not have the people and the population to sustain them. We do not have it! So reduce, take away paying the duty up front. It does no one any good in this day and age. And allow them to be able to pay it when they sell.

That is what has got to happen because otherwise the perpetual thing is this. Government is going to continue to have to loan money. How do they pay it back with a population that is declining? How? They are going to have to continue to borrow money. Inflation then goes up. How will we survive? And so the knock-on effect of all of these things we are seeing and we are feeling now.

I appreciate the Government's attempt at showing us where we are going to go in the future. But what it is lacking in, as has already been said, is detail. So I appreciate those Ministers who have given us some detail. I do not, in my opinion, appreciate the statement [about] what this person did not do and what that person did not do, and legacy issues. Here

and now, Mr. Speaker! Let's deal with here and now. We can talk about the past, but it ain't fixing right now. We need some solutions on the table.

So I thank you for this time, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it has been a fairly good debate. And so I thank you, and, once again, I thank all the Members of Parliament who have stuck it out through this COVID-19 time. I know it has not been easy for the Ministers. It certainly has not been easy for us as Opposition, looking and watching at what is going on. So I appreciate the hard work that has been put in. But I do know that more can be done. And I know that more can be done even swifter.

So let's get on with it, Government, otherwise it is going to be a tough year for you. Get it done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I see the Minister of Finance in front of the screen there. Minister of Finance, would you like your 30 minutes?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I promise you, as I always do, that I will not take 30 minutes. I plan to be, as I always am, very efficient in my remarks.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Many have spoken before me, and I think there is a bunch more after me. So I am not going to spend a whole lot of time going through the entire response to the Throne Speech. I do, however, want to focus on a couple of areas that fall within my portfolio.

There was mention earlier today of the Caroline Bay project and the Fairmont Southampton Hotel. And I always think it is really important that we deal from a common set of facts. And so, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I will provide a brief update on where things currently stand.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: As it relates to Caroline Bay, Honourable Members should recall that the courts appointed joint provisional liquidators to take over the handling of the Caroline Bay asset. And as of today, the joint provisional liquidators are still responsible for that asset.

In the meantime, the Government team has been working very, very hard because we have probably 95 per cent of the secured claims against the asset. So the likelihood of us getting the asset in the

event of the liquidation is very high. And so my team has been working on a plan to take the asset forward once we are awarded the asset.

I think it is really, really important that folks kind of understand how we got to this place. And this is not in any way an effort to try to point fingers and assign blame. I mean, I think people can decide for themselves what has happened and where we now find ourselves. But the reality is that, with the benefit of some time and some experience, we determined that the project as initially conceived was ambitious. However, it lacked financing, it lacked proper project planning and oversight, it lacked proper project management, and it lacked proper project execution. So in light of all of those gaps, I am duty-bound to ensure that when the Government of Bermuda takes possession of this asset in due course, that all of those gaps have been filled.

Earlier today I issued a Ministerial Statement, and one of the questions coming out of the Statement asked, *Who are the consultants who have been paid a certain amount of money over the course of the first six months?* What we have done this time around is we have hired some experts to advise us. And I am duty-bound as the Minister of Finance to take advice and then make a decision. What we are doing now is determining what the best way forward is, because what we have learned from this exercise is the notion that the Government will step in to support a project means that the Government is taking on all the downside risk. And I have \$200 million of it to show.

So let me pivot from there onto the Fairmont Southampton because I think the lessons from the Caroline Bay project are very instructive. And any Minister of Finance or anybody in Bermuda who does not take heed of the lessons of Caroline Bay when dealing with Fairmont Southampton would be reckless.

Now, we have been working with the developers and the owners of the Fairmont Southampton over the course of the last 18 to 24 months as they have tried to secure financing for redeveloping the asset. That process has been very, very difficult. The negotiations have been spirited. The asks have been generous, and our responses have been appropriate.

It is not the Government's responsibility to take on the risk of private developers. And that was a classic case of what went wrong at Morgan's Point. And so I can tell you categorically that we will not do the same thing with Fairmont Southampton where the Government stands in line to hold the bag of nothing when things go wrong. And while I appreciate that there is a whole lot of economic activity to come out of both Caroline Bay and Fairmont Southampton, my responsibility in the first instance is to understand the risk, to figure out how to mitigate it, and then to manage going forward from there. And so we are taking our time and we are challenging the developers to do their work with their investors to find a capital structure

that makes sense and push the project in the best light to be successful. It should not be the Government's job to make that happen for them.

It is interesting that one of my colleagues used the words *tale of two speeches* earlier on today. Because on the one hand it seems as though I am being asked to kind of hurry up and get it done, but in the process of hurrying up and getting it done, don't make any mistakes. So we are going to take our time to do this properly with a view that a good deal for the country is the best deal for the country. And doing one in which we focus on only one aspect, economic activity, at the risk of financial consequence, has been proven already with Morgan's Point not to be so much of a good deal.

So we will continue to work with the folks who purchased the hotel. We are in ongoing discussions with them regularly. My hope is that over the course of the coming weeks we will find some way to find common ground in the best interests of their asset, but also of our country and our balance sheet.

Now, switching gears slightly, there was a comment made earlier about *why isn't the Ministry of Finance which has a strong team of competent executives, leading the economic recovery programme, the project management activities?* I would like to thank the Opposition Leader for the compliment of my team. They are a very good team, but they are a small team who are stretched very thin. This is the same team responsible for the public pension reform, economic substance, taxes and new tax regime, the budget, business development activities, financing of our debt, and our AML/ATF framework. So the team is busy; it is short-staffed, and we do not have capacity today to then take on the responsibility of managing the Project Management Office for the Economic Recovery Plan. And so inasmuch as we identified a need to get resources to help us get stuff done, I find it rich to be criticised for seeking the help that we need to get things done properly.

Mr. Speaker, there was a comment made earlier about, and the previous speaker just made a reference to duties and custom duty and the payment of custom duty. I would like folks to know that today in place already is a scheme that allows persons to defer paying their duty on the goods that they import. The programme exists today. It is very seldom used. So I have tasked my team with getting an understanding on why are people not using the programme, but it exists. The consequence of this course is, you know, the custom duties present a substantial portion of the Government's revenue and the Government's cash flow. So inasmuch as we defer the receipt of those duties, we put a strain on the Government's liquidity in the short term. That is a consequence and so, again, my job is to kind of develop solutions but also understand the impacts of those solutions to make sure they are not creating other problems as we are trying to solve something else.

The last thing I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the reference to the lending or borrowing by charities. I think I referenced this earlier this week in my post-Throne Speech press conference when a reporter asked me about the challenges that were being faced by third sector participants. Do I believe and do I accept that a loan product is the right product for every charity? Absolutely not. But what we are [not] trying to do here is create a one-size-fits-all solution. What we are trying to do here is be creative to kind of help those who may have the ability to avail themselves through a credit product. And inasmuch as they can use it, then it will be available for them at a competitive price. We certainly accept that there is more to do to aid the third sector and we are working with the third sector to kind of create solutions for them that make the most sense for them and their stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work to be done and I have spent my time in the last three years trying to focus on things that come across my desk that are in my portfolio. And I do not think that most people really care that I inherited a problem. All they want me to do is to get on with getting it fixed. And so that is where I choose to focus my energies. And with [Fairmont] Southampton and with Caroline Bay I am going to bring together good people who are going to help me figure out how we move this forward, accepting that sometimes the best solution is not going to happen overnight. It is going to take some time and some proper introspection and for the Government to fully understand its position and the value that it brings to the table, as opposed to being in a rush to get something done for the quick win which in the long term creates a massive problem for the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. And Minister, yes, you said you would keep it brief and you were brief.

Is there any other Member who wishes to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Campbell, you have your 30 minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I agree with two things the last speaker on the Opposition's side said. I do agree, Mr. Speaker, that the Throne Speech and certain other processes we are obligated to do as legislators, can be changed or modified so that our time is better spent, better utilised.

I also agree that as legislators we must be able to move fast. Having said that, I do recall numerous occasions, and I think the Minister of Finance touched on this, where we were criticised for moving fast. So I find the change quite refreshing coming from their side.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since the Opposition Leader gave his Reply, so I am going to refer to a couple of comments that he made because it is easy to have forgotten what he said since he delivered his response.

He talked about the elephant in the room in reference to COVID-19. And just a brief definition, Mr. Speaker, of what that means, it means *an obvious major problem or issue that people avoid discussing or acknowledging*. Mr. Speaker, this Government has not avoided discussing or acknowledging the impact of COVID-19 on this country. Rather, Mr. Speaker, the Government has worked tirelessly along with the health care workers of this country to keep us all safe. Rather, Mr. Speaker, the Government, in particular the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security, have faced this country in press conference after press conference keeping us all updated on current developments pertaining to COVID-19. Rather, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Labour, along with their Ministry's support teams, have laboured to provide a means for those rendered out of work or underemployed so that they are able to feed themselves and their families. Rather, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance in conjunction with his advisory committee has devised a plan for the economic recovery of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader concluded his remarks by stating that the 2021 Speech from the Throne was the most abbreviated in his 20-year (I think he said 20 years) involvement in politics. And I agree; it was abbreviated. But I am going to provide a little story, Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind.

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Vance Campbell: There is a story amongst philosophy students that there was an exam question, and that exam question was *Why?* There was one question on the exam and that was the question, *Why?* Now, Mr. Speaker, I am sure the majority of the students in that exam centre wrote page upon page in answer to that question. But as the story goes, there was one student who wrote their response, their answer to that question as *Why not?* He got up after a minute and handed in his paper. That person received an "A," as the story went. So, Mr. Speaker, something does not have to be long to be spot on. It does not have to be long to be of value or to be correct. And I thank the Opposition Leader for pointing that out.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's Economic Recovery Plan focused on areas with the highest impact for Bermuda's medium term economic growth

and employment. The Opposition has said that this plan, consisting of 31 initiatives falling under seven core themes, is way too long and burdensome.

By way of another example, Mr. Speaker, I would like to dispute that. We were just presented with a list of audit requirements, Mr. Speaker. It was two pages long, and in very small print I might add. And one of my staff members came rushing to me, *Look at this long list. This is unmanageable*. So, I pointed out to them that about half of that work has already been done and the other half will flow very easily from what has been accomplished already. And I believe that is the case with these 31 initiatives. Some of the work is already started, and once we start some of the other work, the rest will flow from that, Mr. Speaker. So it is not as daunting a task as it has been made out to be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Economic Recovery Plan is a 30-page document that is already in the public domain. And given that, Mr. Speaker, does it make sense to incorporate this document into the Throne Speech just to make it longer? I say no, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are volumes in the public domain about the Government's plan to reform education. Briefly, to eliminate middle schools, create a two-tiered structure, a return to a two-tiered structure; the creation of five signature schools. The first two signature schools, Mr. Speaker, Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy, will be launched in September 2022. Does it make sense, Mr. Speaker, to incorporate these volumes around the reform of education which is already in the public domain into the Throne Speech just to make it long enough to satisfy the Opposition? I say no, Mr. Speaker.

The Government has already done some of these, Mr. Speaker. We heard Minister Hayward speak of personal employment plans, amendments to financial assistance to extend eligibility from five to seven years. We know of the unemployment benefit that was put in place as a joint venture between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour. But flowing from that, Mr. Speaker, was the supplemental unemployment benefit. We heard about training programmes today for over 700 who have benefited. We heard about the success of the job referral system. We now know more about the youth employment strategy, the summer employment programme and how that continued to be successful this past summer.

We already know about amendments to the ¹Employment Act—paid paternity leave, 13 weeks of paid [maternity] leave, broadened categories qualifying for bereavement leave, limitations around the extensions of probation, and eligibility for vacation is a lot sooner than one year. It is now six months.

The Speech from the Throne talks about financial loan and mortgage assistance to communities of faith and third sector entities. I know that idea was

¹ Employment (Maternity Leave Extension and Paternity Leave Amendment) Act 2019

disparaged; but I am sure that some will welcome that, and many would welcome that. We heard of the BEDC helping 287 businesses with over \$5.1 billion in financial assistance. Mr. Speaker, I ask you, would any of these be more effective if the Throne Speech was not so abbreviated? I say no, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to health care reform the Opposition Leader said we are kicking the can down the road. And as I mentioned earlier, the Government has been accused in the past of moving too fast. In this instance our actions are being referred to as kicking the can down the road. Although I will give MP Pearman credit; he recognised the value in taking a pause and reflecting and changing direction if necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader stated in his response that economic growth and recovery really come from a Government plan and he said Government should be the enabler. I agree with the second comment, but I disagree with the first. Why? Mr. Speaker, let me explain.

How does a government ensure that it is an enabler? Does it stand on the sideline and hope and pray that things work out for the best? That would be what the Opposition Leader's first statement would seem to imply, that we stand on the side and hope and pray that things work out. On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the Government must create an environment that is attractive enough to investors so that they want to bring their business to our shores as opposed to going to other jurisdictions. How do we do that? Proper planning and the passing of the appropriate legislation will support Bermuda's attractiveness and make us the jurisdiction of choice for potential investors.

Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question *Why?* does not have to be a 40- to 50-page dissertation. The answer can simply be *Why not?*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Furbert, you have your 30 minutes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not use those 30 minutes, but I—

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I do not like to talk long, Mr. Speaker. I prefer action over talking.

But as a parent, and we are all parents . . . well, some of us are parents. And if you are a parent, you end up repeating yourself over and over and over trying to get your children to do things. Right? So I

really want to start by talking about the topic of our Throne Speech. And that topic, that heading, Mr. Speaker, is social renewal and economic recovery.

As a Government, we recognise that this is where we are right now. This is what we have to do to move through and work through this pandemic. So a lot of the initiatives within the Throne Speech are focused in on the topics of social renewal and economic recovery. And what governments are supposed to do is help their communities and help their people to experience a renewal and to experience a recovery. So that is what we have set out to do.

Mr. Speaker, because I have heard some comments this evening in regard to the Department of Child and Family Services, I want to thank all of the workers in the Department of Child and Family Services, from family preservation to foster care to screening to counselling (and I am probably missing some) but everyone who works within . . . and the residential treatment homes—everybody who works for the Department of Child and Family Services who are responsible for child protection and social protection.

There has been this narrative out there, Mr. Speaker, in regard to Child and Family Services, and I heard one [INAUDIBLE] speak to the abuse and neglect. And imagine a body who is responsible for child protection being labelled and called . . . and all these accusations in regard to the Department of Child and Family Services. They do an awesome job trying to protect the children of Bermuda. And this topic is a sensitive one, Mr. Speaker, because children, families, people do not want you all up in their business knowing what is happening behind their doors.

But I do honestly want to take this time to thank the Department of Child and Family Services who work closely with the US Council on Accreditation. And Bermuda has its own National Standards Committee that looks at accreditation of the Department of Child and Family Services. And we have had consultants over the years as well come in and look at the job that we are doing within the Department of Child and Family Services who have given great feedback in regard to how our child safeguarding and child protection systems are, when you compare them to other small states and other jurisdictions. We actually have some consultants coming in next week to help us, or to share with us information around litigation guardians for children.

And if anyone does not know, litigation guardians are court appointed and they look out for the best interest of children while there are court proceedings, because we want to be able to provide strengthening and we want our children to be able to have a voice and also have protections.

But the Throne Speech of this year, Mr. Speaker, is just a snapshot of the amazing work that civil servants do, that Ministers do because we can speak about so much more that our ministries are working on. I just mentioned about the litigation guard-

ian framework, but in the Children Act we have a National Child Safeguarding Committee that is working on child safeguarding policies.

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: The Attorney General, who is the former Minister of the Department of Child and Family Services, actually in 2019, you have this whole big legislation here, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, of the Child Safeguarding (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2019. We went through that diligently to beef up and strengthen our child safeguarding legislation. So I encourage any colleague in this House to go and read that document because a lot of time was spent on that to strengthen our child safeguarding policies and legislation. And we will continue to do that. You know, children are very precious to us and we have to be able to have all the protections and safeguards out there for them.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, I want to just talk about some of the calls that I get as Minister. Some of those calls would be around fathers trying to get back in the lives of their children, with single parents struggling to get housing because they have more than three children and it is very difficult for them to secure housing.

Actually, a mother, a single parent who had over four children, had saved approximately \$20,000, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, because her goal is to buy a house. But I could imagine there were still roadblocks, particularly with our banking institutions, that would block her from even being able to complement that savings with a loan to actually purchase a home. Or there probably are not homes out there that would fall within that bracket of affordability with what it is that she has saved.

On the other hand, we have parents who are just out of work and cannot afford the rent and are getting assistance through Financial Assistance but are not in the most ideal living situation and would like to see a way out of that one day.

And then I have persons calling me in regard to senior issues, particularly senior financial abuse. Someone shared with me the other day [that] someone was working at a seniors home and they ended up doing work for the senior and somehow through their relationship they were able to get their banking information and would go into the bank with them and get them to withdraw money. And they actually managed to withdraw over \$12,000 of the senior's money. So these social protections that we are developing as a Government are very vital and very important for our children, for our seniors, for persons who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

In the Throne Speech we are actually looking to beef up and strengthen our senior abuse legislation as well. So we want the listening audience to look out for that because that is also very important, particular-

ly when we are talking about economic recovery. We do not want anyone [skanked] out of their money that they have worked so hard for.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, I also wanted to talk about another strengthening initiative that the Children Act speaks of which the Department of Child and Family Services provides as well. And that is counselling services for children who have been victims of sexual abuse. We now provide counselling at no charge for children who are victims of sexual abuse as well as their perpetrator because we want to make sure that we are helping at all angles. We are helping to solve this . . . to treat . . . to provide intervention at all angles so that there is a holistic . . . it is not just the victim, but also the perpetrator.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion around charities and what we are doing as a Government in regard to providing loans, providing opportunities for loans for charities and churches. Again, around that topic of economic recovery, not everyone is going to be able to take up a loan, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker. But for those who can, and they do the right thing with it, they could actually come out of their financial burden that much greater. But that all depends on how they plan on using it, but it is an opportunity.

Actually, I want to . . . Premier, I hope you don't mind because I was able to gather some information just because we are doing research with gathering data for UN Women, and for 2021, actually, we have approximately 1,500 existing entrepreneurs registered with the BEDC. And the BEDC has actually guaranteed loans up to \$3 million and also provided microloans for over \$1 million. And then as far as the COVID-19 loan grants, they have also provided funding for over \$1 million as well, and provided emergency grants for an approximation of close to \$500,000. So, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, people are taking advantages of loan opportunities. They are taking advantage of it where they can. Like I said, it is not going to be for everyone. It's not. But for those who do take advantage of it and do the right thing with it, they could come out even stronger.

Charities, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, and the non-profit sector have been hit pretty hard. I do have the opportunity to meet with them and those who do participate. We try to meet monthly, or every other month. With this pandemic they have not been able to fundraise as they usually do because of size restrictions and having restrictions about getting around other people. So it has been very challenging, and they have had to be very innovative and creative with their fundraising techniques or strategies. So it has been very difficult for the charities sector and the non-profit sector particularly with their fundraising efforts.

We realise that this will put them and has put them in a very difficult financial situation. So to the listening public, again, support our third sector. If you are able to give a little extra to support our third sec-

tor, I am encouraging you to do this. They do fill lots of gaps for us in our community. But, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, I do believe that this loan initiative, while it may not be for [everyone], it can work. It can work for some.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, there was conversation earlier in the House, a discussion in regard to us being one. There is a verse in the Bible which speaks to unions, and persons who enter into marriage becoming one, or becoming equally yoked. And I always believed, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, that we come together, people come together as a union, not necessarily as one, because we are all different, we are all unique, we come with different paradigms. But we have to be able to work together. You have to be able to work together because we are all interconnected in some way. We have to figure out this social renewal and economic recovery by working together. Not necessarily coming as one, but figuring out how we are going to have some win-win situations for the people in our country.

So I am very hopeful and I am very excited in regard to the work that this Government continues to do. Like I said, the Throne Speech is a snapshot of a year when we were trying to be very specific and measurable and make our goals attainable, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker. And I think that we set out to do that with this particular Throne Speech.

So, I want to thank my colleagues for all the work they do and will continue to do for uplifting and providing uplift for our people. Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister Furbert. Are there any further speakers?

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

The Deputy Speaker: That sounds like the Honourable Member Zane De Silva. You have the floor, Mr. De Silva. Continue.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is my sound and camera okay?

The Deputy Speaker: I don't see you because I can't . . . but you are sounding good. But go ahead . . . I see you now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. All right. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard many of our colleagues on both sides tonight thank the frontline workers. And I would also like to join them in thanking the frontline workers. But what I would like to emphasise tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is I would like to thank and highlight again our Premier and our Ministers. Because even though we may have one, two or three or even the Premier out front during the course

of this pandemic, I know that every one of our Ministers has been inundated and working ever so hard for the people of this country.

I would like to not stop there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would also like to thank the Backbenchers of the Progressive Labour Party because I know there have been trees that have been cut, there has been trash that has been taken away, food that has been supplied, school supplies given to our children by many of our Backbenchers and Ministers, by the way, over this period. And I would say even though many of us, if not all of us, do it all year long, during this pandemic I know there has been an absolutely fantastic [INAUDIBLE] behalf of all of our Progressive Labour Party members, and our Senators.

So, I know that we all do this and we do not look for the thanks, but I am thanking them publicly because I know the work that they have been doing and I certainly hear the feedback from all across the Island. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and highlight my appreciation and my constituents' appreciation and the people's appreciation to our Ministers and Backbenchers.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been several Opposition Members today who stated that the economy was in bad shape before COVID-19. And I am not going to totally disagree with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I think to put things in context, we have to remember that when we took over this Government in 2017 we cannot . . . if the Opposition is going to try and state how bad the economy was before COVID-19 struck us, I think it is important to refresh everybody's memory about how we got there in 2017 and beyond.

You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2013 former OBA Finance Minister Bob Richards borrowed \$800 million. He said that this would carry the Government through three years. And you might recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that before a two-year period was up, that [money] was gone. And on top of that the OBA turned around and borrowed another \$150 million, and they burnt through that before they left office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, leaving this Government, the PLP Government in 2017, with a extra \$1 billion worth of debt.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will talk about the \$1.2 billion debt they found in 2012. Well, in 2012, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that debt was built up over a 14-year period. Now, I could stand here and spend my whole 30 minutes talking about what we did between 1998 and 2008. But I have highlighted this many times and I am not going to waste too much time on that tonight because I would like to talk about the Throne Speech and some of the comments that were made and some of the comments I would like to make. But let's not forget that between 1998 and 2008, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think anyone that had a business, whether you sold peanuts or you sold diamonds, everyone who owned a business during that PLP Gov-

ernment timeframe between 1998 and 2008 made money. Every business! And I would challenge anybody to tell me that they didn't during that 14-year period, that 10-year period of a PLP Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget when we had that crash in 2008/09, Bermuda suffered. You had Newstead, the new hotel fold. You had Butterfield Bank, Trimingham's, The Reefs, [and] 9 Beaches. You had countries like Greece, Portugal, France, [and] the USA, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Did all these people forget how to run a business or run a country overnight? Or are they going to continue to say that the PLP Government was the fault of that crash in 2008/09? So, I just like to remind people of some of the things that happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget also, because a lot of this today that we have discussed and I have heard colleagues on both sides talk about, revolves around money. And I think it is important that we point out to everyone who is listening, all the people of this country, Morgan's Point. We are up over \$200 million because of the mishaps and the mismanagement of the Bermuda purse by the OBA Government. The airport. We have a \$300 million challenge that we have got to deal with over the next 30 years. The MRG [minimum revenue guarantee] at the airport is already up over \$40 million and counting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let's not forget the infamous America's Cup, over \$100 million; the Corporation of Hamilton, \$18 million; and Cross Island, \$40 million that we are still paying on every month, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All this adds up to big, big money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is over a billion dollars.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that note, I also noted that Honourable Member Scott Pearman talked this morning, and some of the others did too, about our money, but Mr. Pearman in particular. And he asked a question, *What are we doing to reduce Government spending costs by this Government?* And just this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Finance Minister's Ministerial Statement, and with your indulgence I will just quote from his Ministerial Statement from this morning because people . . . I mean, it was just read this morning. And I think it is fantastic news.

The Minister told us that total revenues for the first half of this fiscal 2021/22 year are up almost \$41 million and almost 9 per cent over September 2020. He also stated that payroll taxes were up over \$6 million when compared to the same period last year. And we are on budget!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is fantastic news!

And stamp duties were up \$7 million.

With regard to the Honourable Member Pearman's comment or question about reducing cost, [the Minister] also said in his Statement this morning that salaries and wages were down by \$17.1 million, 4 per cent below budget. And employer overhead was down by \$7.4 million, or 11 per cent below budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what part of that did he not understand?

Our Finance Minister—and I heard you this morning in your speech say that you reckoned he is one of the best Finance Minister's we have ever had. And I'm not going to argue with that statement at all. I think Minister Curtis [Dickinson] has got his finger on the pulse. He has a fantastic team. And I think that [the late] Porky Manders set the bar high when he was there. And God rest his soul. But they do have a really dynamic team and I think they should be supported and they are. And I would like to congratulate them because they have had a very tough job in front of them as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing I just want to touch on is former OBA Premier [MP] Dunkley used his 20 minutes, and he made a few comments that I would like to rebut and comment on myself.

He stated that we as the Progressive Labour Party are always critical of the airport. Well, why are we always critical of the airport? We know that this deal was done under the cloak of darkness. And speaking of that, another comment—I will switch channels real quick. The Honourable Member Pearman questioned why we stated in the Throne Speech that we are looking at constitutional changes. And he stated, his words, *If it is significant, we should say what they are*. Well, if that is not the pot calling the kettle black, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, how can that Honourable Member make that statement about our note in the Throne Speech about constitutional change when they had a Throne Speech and never mentioned that airport and two weeks later the airport deal was announced?

A \$300 million deal was announced two weeks afterwards, and it was not mentioned in their Throne Speech. So, I would suggest that Honourable Member might want to look in house before he starts looking out house, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, you know what else I found very interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that both OBA, Honourable Member Scott Pearman and former OBA Premier Michael Dunkley both talked about the health care system. I found it astounding—astounding—especially when MP Dunkley reminded us that there has been a 193 per cent increase in health care costs. MP Pearman also talked about, you know, everyone, all our people, should have health care coverage and what not. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find that very, very rich coming from . . . and in particular, not MP Pearman, because he is just a new Member and he probably has not had a chance to do all of his homework. But the fact of the matter is, I am sure, that Learned Member is aware that under a Progressive Labour Party Government we spent several years developing the National Health Plan, several years.

And I mean, I have to say this because it is very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During that peri-

od when we developed the National Health Plan, and I was the Health Minister, we had six task groups that involved 66 people. Sixty-six people. And I would like to say it is probably one of the widest cross-sections of task groups that we have had in our history. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, in December 2012 when we lost that election, had we not lost it, that health plan would have been implemented by now.

But here is the kicker! We lost that election, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I don't know if you recall former Member of the House, Pat [Gordon-]Pamplin, became the Health Minister. And you know what she and Premier Dunkley did under the OBA Government? They took that health plan and they put it on the shelf. Years of work by many of our professional people in this country who dedicated their time, freely by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, freely. And I am talking about some very influential people, as you know, you will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[They] took that health plan . . . I remember in late November/December we had a press conference, we held it up, and we said, *Listen, we are just about ready. We almost have it done.* And it was close. It was taken and it was put on the shelf by the OBA Government led by Michael Dunkley. So, let's not forget that.

When you talk about you care about the people of this country, and everyone should have health care, and no one should have to go without the care that they need to live, then let's remember where we were in 2012 and here it is 10 years later and we got those same Members of that particular party saying, *Why haven't we done anything with regard to health care in the country?* I find that just astounding, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And just to quote from the Throne Speech Reply, this is what the Opposition Leader said in big bold writing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 16. "As the PLP government has run Bermuda's healthcare for most of the past twenty years, it is unconscionable and incredible that there is currently no healthcare plan. Bermuda deserves better."

And Cole Simons, the Honourable Member, was a Member of that OBA Government that came in 2012 and shelved that health plan. So, if the Honourable Member wants to know why there is currently no health plan, that is why—because they shelved it. And they had five years—five years, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to do something about it and they have done zip!

But the good thing is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a current Health Minister that even though she has probably been one of the busiest Ministers, we know that she is still behind the scenes trying to push that along. And I would suspect that she will come out with that health care plan in due course, and everyone is going to be happy with [it].

How's my time doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Keep on. You have quite a bit. You got about 14 minutes.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have also heard Members from the other side mention several times tonight about our recovery plan that has 31 priorities. Again, I find it . . . see, this is where you cannot satisfy the other side. If we would have said in our Throne Speech today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have three or four priority projects, they would have said, *Is that all you have got?* But we heard several Members say today, *You know, 31 is too many.* Well, it might be too many for an OBA Government, but it is not for a PLP Government. I just find comments like that . . . you wonder how sincere they are about representing the people of this country. You really have to. You really do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to just read an excerpt from the first paragraph of our Throne Speech and with your indulgence I would like read it.

"When the story of this third decade of this 21st Century is written, it will no doubt be an account of how the nations of the world were humbled by an invisible enemy, an enemy against whom our only defence was to defy the very social interaction we require to thrive."

That is so very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So important, because not only Bermuda but the entire world . . . that statement, I think, speaks to the entire world, every country. I think no one was spared. No one. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I hear Members opposite talking about the economy, finance, what are we doing, what is our plan, we were given the National Economic Report of Bermuda 2020 earlier on last year. You know I like to keep these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if I could give a quick quote out of the 2021 Outlook for Bermuda by the National Economic Report of Bermuda, I will read it. "The most significant risks stems from slowing global growth. Although the world economy is predicted to grow in 2021, it will take time for people in other countries to start travelling at the rate of prior years and this could negatively impact the economy, especially the tourism sector. . . . [I]nsurance industry risks, risks from OECD proposals on global corporate tax rates," (and we know where that is headed) "the impact of global warming and climate change," (and our Deputy Premier Walter Roban is on that like white on rice) "the effects of an aging population, declining workforce and escalating health care costs. All of these factors could have a negative impact on our growth prospects."

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is very poignant. That paragraph is very . . . and the reason I have it is because when I read it back then, I said, *You know what? That is very, very poignant. And it is so very important.* And it is important for us to remember that not only Bermuda, the entire world, I would say

almost every country, is going to be facing the same problems as us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because all countries, or many countries rely on tourism.

And whilst we are heading that way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on tourism, I wanted to speak about that for just a moment. Now, you had the Honourable Member Pearman, again, not only did he say it in his presentation today, but also, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . if you could just give me a second, I will find it.

The OBA, and I quote from page 5 on tourism from the Opposition's Throne Speech Reply. And I quote, "I was very startled when in this Throne Speech, the Government indicated that they were leaning towards dismantling the Bermuda Tourism Authority . . . I then reflected on the historic tension and strain between the PLP government and the BTA, as a former PLP tourism minister" (referring to me Mr. Deputy Speaker) "stated that they, the government, were going to quote 'rip out the engine of the BTA' end quote."

Well, you might remember that famous quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I said at the time that as the Minister I was not only going to look under the hood, but I was going to pull the engine apart. I didn't say I was going to take it out. I said I was going to pull it apart. And that is a big difference. If I pull the engine on your car apart and I put it back together and it runs a hell of a lot better, it is a lot different from pulling it out. Okay? There is a big difference from ripping the engine out. No, no, no. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the interesting thing is this.

Now I will switch over to *our* Throne Speech, and on page 8 I will quote what *our* Premier said. "Whilst the execution of any tourism campaign and marketing strategy is the purview of the BTA," (this is important) "leadership in tourism policy must come from the Government of Bermuda, who commit tens of millions of taxpayer funds to the organisation, a commitment which demands a far greater return than has been realised in the years since the creation of the Authority."

Now, the Opposition may not like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is tough luck because I believe the Premier has this absolutely correct. And I will tell you my version of it. I remember when I was Minister this is what I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was that, yes, the Tourism Authority, they operate more or less on their own accord. But Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Bermuda Tourism Authority [BTA] are operating under an OBA Government today and they end up being the authority of a PLP Government tomorrow, the vision of a PLP Government or a PLP Minister, may be completely different from an OBA Government or OBA Minister. So, you see, therein lies a very important point.

The goal of the OBA might be to tell the BTA, *Listen, I want you concentrating on building some hotels over there for my mates*. Whereas the PLP might be saying, *We want you to build a couple of hotels*

over there for the people of the country. So that is very important. And I made that statement several times when I was Minister, and I will say it again. I believe the BTA has done some good work in the past. And I am sure they will do some good in the future.

I know that they have got a team and they are struggling like everyone else. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the vision of the Progressive Labour Party is to go south, and the vision of a former Government or former Government Minister was to go north, then we have a problem. And therein lies the challenge. And that challenge to me should be fixed and it will be fixed. And I am sure that the current Tourism Minister, the Premier of Bermuda, would do just that.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to finish on this note. I have listened to and read our Throne Speech. I have listened to and read the Reply to the Throne Speech. I think that this Progressive Labour Party Government has Ministers and Backbenchers and Senators, and let's go a little further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you know the Progressive Labour Party is not run by the Ministers and Backbenchers and Senators of our party. Our membership is vocal, they are demanding, as you know, and they have a large say in the direction in which the PLP heads.

I think that with the Throne Speech that has been produced for the people of this country, not only the Progressive Labour Party membership and our friends and our families, but also those who look at it, look at what we have done, and if they look at some of the things that we hope to accomplish in the next year, I think they will feel confident and they will remain hopeful that we can pull out of this pandemic. And I think, again, with Finance Minister Curtis Dickson at the helm, and his team, I think they can do just that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you and I would like to assure the people of this country that this Progressive Labour Party Government has always had you in the forefront and we will keep you in the forefront.

Thank you, very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member Mr. Zane De Silva.

Any further speakers?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes. Good evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to—

The Deputy Speaker: Sounds like MP from St. George's. Honourable Minister Ming, you have the floor.

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I wanted to offer my short contribution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this evening. First of all I would like to say that I am honoured to be the Minister of Na-

tional Security and to be able to say thank you to the amazing teams and services that make up the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure you can imagine that it is not an easy time for many of the government ministries, and in particular National Security. The services that are in National Security, just so that persons know, we have police, fire, customs, Department of Corrections, and the Royal Bermuda Regiment, and then we have the Ministry Headquarters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our contribution this year in terms of the Throne Speech was centred on the CCTV system. Mr. Deputy Speaker, CCTV, and not just in Bermuda, from even around the world, has become one of those entities, things that we have to live with and it is everywhere. It is used in so many ways across various ministries within the government, but in particular it can be used to assist Bermuda Police Service [BPS] in tackling crime, in road traffic offences, and in having video recordings of incidents as they happen.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there has been much conversation with regard to some of the antisocial behaviour that we are seeing on the Island at this time. I will continue to say, this is not who we are and it is not who we want to be. I know that one of my colleagues earlier, the Opposition Leader said, *But this is who we are*. For me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as long as I am sitting here and I can actively speak to that, [I would say it] is not who are and it is not who we want to be. And as a country I would hope that we do not ever become complacent and desensitized to the matters that we deal with now on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if it is the situation we have right now, I believe that each and every one of us has a role to play in the behaviours that we see today. We can take each one of these situations and go back and look historically. There is a breakdown that happened somewhere, whether it be in the family structure [or] in the parenting structure, we can go on and on. But guess what? It is not just a PLP problem. It is not an OBA problem. It is *our* problem. It is a *Bermuda* problem. And I do want to thank my colleague who spoke earlier, Mr. Premier, and he said it must stop now. And he seemed to . . . he recognised that this is an Island-wide problem, and we are all in this together and we need to get it solved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that people may not understand this, but the CCTV system that is currently in place is almost 10 years old. In the terms of technology that equates to what we now call “end of support; end of life.” And so it is timely that the Government has committed to a replacement for the CCTV system. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many things that you can speak to [about the] benefits with regard to CCTV. One of the things that if you are out there in the community you see, is that fewer and fewer people want to stand up and even speak to what it is that they may have seen or witnessed. And

so maybe the enhancement and upgrade or brand-new CCTV system will allow us to be able to have eyes through technology that will assist with crime investigations.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not something that we as a Government are taking lightly, and it is not even something that we as a community are taking lightly. Because I have had persons, many people reaching out from the various communities sharing their concerns and also providing some ideas and feedback. And I am encouraged by that because I think it is going to take our village—we say that a lot. And I think that this is something that we will all have to work on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to take time and say that I recognise the strain that some of the day-to-day operations are taking on some of the services. I am grateful to the services that have committed and have persons involved in CISM. And what that stands for, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Critical Incident Stress Management. And so I know earlier one of my colleagues said, *Oh, you know, the BPS and these services, they need to have* (I think it was) *on-call mental health*. Well, I mean, I do not know if they know it or not, but they actually do have that. I know the BPS have an active CISM team who are on standby and always ready to assist officers who may have had a traumatic experience and need to have some level of counselling, interaction, talking, engagement. So, in case my colleagues did not know that, that is something that is there and is available to the officers in the services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are committed to the completing of the Bermuda Police Authority. We look forward to bringing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope it is something where the community can have some involvement, engagement and provide feedback with regard to the Bermuda Police Service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that was said and I totally, totally disagree with is that sometimes the services such as fire, prisons, and the Regiment are the forgotten children in National Security. Absolutely not! I never, ever would agree to that. I will say that we are quick to say a lot of things sometimes in our political world, but these things have real impact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been the Minister for National Security for one year, or just over one year. In 2014, our current prison facilities, and in particular I am speaking about the Westgate [Correctional] Facility, would have been around for 20 years [old], and it should have had a 20-year review. That is based on industry standards, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That review never happened. And it has not happened since then. So we find now that we have some issues that are maintenance related that we are tackling as a Ministry. We have the list. We are working with the POA [Prison Officers Association]. We are working with the prison executive. And we are knocking out

these things. And we have a plan from a phased standpoint to be able to address the things that we can address now. We have things that are critical. We are working with the POA to determine what things are priority and we are working through this list.

I say all that to say, though, because we are very quick to say, *stepchild*, and things like that, we forget that, you know what, we were not always the Government. And when other persons were here, they may not have done things that should have been done as well. And maybe if some of these things had happened in a 20-year review, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of these maintenance things which are now reaching a critical stage could have actually been addressed. But it is not time to be political and try to score political points because these are people's lives and working environments and inmates' homes that we are talking about.

So, our Government has to step up to the plate, not worry about what didn't happen, and deal with the things that are in front of us now. And that is exactly what it is that we are doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to say that I recognise that the times are challenging and that we as a country probably need to spend more time looking at some of the similarities that we have as opposed to some of the things that make us different, because those differences at this stage will not help us [on] the hard road I believe that we are going to go down in terms of our recovery and getting us back on track.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to the items that I already mentioned, the Ministry of National Security is also committed to ensuring that our cybersecurity defences are adequate and in place and can protect our Island from the dangerous online actors. We all know the horror stories of persons online. We know these stories of things that have happened in places that have lacked proper cybersecurity protocols, and that is another area that the Ministry of National Security plans to secure and keep our Island safe.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are my [brief] comments. I would hope that I have explained some things to my colleagues who may not know or understand. And I am grateful to our Government for committing, even in these difficult times, to ensuring that the protection and safety of our people in the national security world is being met.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister Renee Ming.

Are there any further speakers?

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

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Swan, Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you and good evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I don't plan to be long this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, that's good. I have got to go to church tomorrow.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, you have got a long weekend and I know very well that you worship both on Saturday and Sunday, and we appreciate that.

The Deputy Speaker: I have to.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I have to.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to start off first by thanking the Premier for the Throne Speech that started off—I actually gave him a call, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and said, *You know, for a Somerset supporter, you opened the innings like Wendell Smith when he opened the innings and used to close the innings down. I mean, straight bat, started off with St. George's*—I mean, what Throne Speech could go wrong that starts off telling that the people of St. George's can look forward to that Marina?

Now, I know that there are persons who maybe wanted him to write 10 pages of every brick and mortar, and who is going to bring the pylons down and the like. But I am here to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that over time those Throne Speeches have become very wordy documents. And the one thing that we in the PLP could say is that from the early 1960s there has always been a manifesto, when it was not fashionable for other parties in Bermuda to even have one. I think I know a little bit about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Progressive Labour Party has always outlined ahead of time what we stand for. And that cannot be [denied]. And it has been a good thing. Even all those years toiling in Opposition, the Progressive Labour Party always came with ideas and suggestions.

Now, I know that there are some who will criticise the former UBP Government. I am not here to do that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know that I have a little bit of history down that road, but I would say that there were many suggestions that were put out by the Progressive Labour Party in Opposition that became Government initiatives. And that is a sign of a responsible Opposition.

I am not going to go into comparing Oppositions because, you know, that is not necessary. But I can look at this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I came to the Legislature in 1998 as a Senator, I studied very

closely at the library up at the House of Assembly when the library was there. It had the big boardroom table in there. That used to be my office. I used to be there and I used to read all the Throne Speeches and all the budget replies from way back in the day. And I was amazed at all the suggestions that the late L. Frederick Wade and the late Eugene Cox and the late Dame Lois Browne-Evans, in particular, used to put forward in Throne Speeches. Great ideas that were incorporated.

In addition to giving a good spanking where necessary, the Government came with a Throne Speech back then on Halloween. And L. Frederick Wade called it the "Trick-or-Treat Throne Speech." And he likened it to the promises of the dump, or *were you being tricked or were you being treated?*

And so I just wanted to say that Throne Speeches do not have to be long. They just have to point out what the Government . . . and particularly when a government has a manifesto that it is going to hang its hat on. And you know, if the Colonel was in the line up to speak, he would have his manifesto right there and he would go to page 6 and say, *Tick! Done!*

So I am here to say that the marina is something that I am very much looking forward to as a representative in that community. And I know the Honourable Member who just spoke and the Honourable Member Ms. Foggo, who lives there, and other Honourable Members who are very near and dear to our heart in St. George's will appreciate the importance of that initiative being mentioned.

And because Ministers have taken the opportunity to speak and flesh out the significance of their particular ministries, the ones who have spoken, and even the Finance Minister weighed in on Morgan's Point, I will use that to dovetail into another thing that was mentioned with regard to Morgan's Point.

The marina in St. George's is near and dear to my heart because, you know, I come from a maritime family of ancient, as well as recent. [I] very much appreciate the opportunities of inward investment that lie before us by the Government making a commitment that we will be doing more for St. George's in this space, notwithstanding that the ancient Town of St. George's is well known globally as a maritime centre in the North Atlantic.

The opportunity for us to capitalise on the superyacht trade and the regattas that go . . . there was just one this weekend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that took place. And I had the occasion to pull out my camera and do a little commentary on the significance of those yachts that leave the northeast around this time of year and then head south to places where we have cousins down in the islands of Antigua and BVI and the like.

So when the Finance Minister gave some great clarity as to the way in which he is tackling Morgan's Point, I was reminded of how the Opposition Leader was so quick to be critical of what we have not

done. And memories sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can be a wee bit short. We understand that. But that was a problem not of our making as Government, but certainly one that our most able Finance Minister is tackling in a space that he is well versed in. As you had stated so very eloquently, our Finance Minister is one that any government would want to have as their Finance Minister.

I remember canvassing for him up there in Warwick. He is now in Pembroke where he grew up. But I remember canvassing for him in Warwick, up there around Belmont and Harbour Road and the like, and going to some homes. I remember those homes quite well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I quite confidently said, *He is our Finance Minister. He is yours as well as mine. And he will serve this country well. And he will make sound decisions.*

He did not make the decision that he settled with that he is having to deal with up at Morgan's Point. But let me say there is opportunity up at Morgan's Point. I feel confident that, as our Finance Minister negotiates us out of that mess that the previous former Government (of which the Opposition Leader was a Cabinet Minister in) saddled us with, there is an opportunity there.

Now, I declare my interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I tend to love golf. And I feel that there is a way in which—and I will remind folks that in 1996 or so, 1997 I believe, Jack Nicklaus flew to Bermuda on a private jet. I do recall he does have one or two. And he had done a study and he had done a plan for a golf course there. I believe there was a company named BEAM Limited. I cannot remember the acronym for it, but I do recall the late Member who died [shortly] after getting elected in 1998. She died in February of 1999, the late Madeline Joell. She had some association with that company, and a few other folk. But anyway, Jack Nicklaus came down and did a plan. There are some buildings up there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Finance Minister is trying to sort out—the previous Government [is criticising] the current Government which is trying to sort out their mess—that are probably about 60 per cent or 70 per cent complete. There was a deep-water dock up there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when they were building they used to bring some very large ships. But I did not grow up in St. George's, that beautiful town that I call home now and root for the greatest Cup Match team that ever lived in this country. There is a deep-water dock where I used to watch those big ships, war ships and the like. [They] used to pull up to port there.

Now, I have been very supportive of the homeporting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was sort of suggesting a year and a quarter ago that homeporting during the pandemic might be an opportunity for us. I was so happy to see that young Minister Scott ("the Minister for Dry Jokes," I call him) come forward and deliver a very good initiative. You know, you don't hear folks patting him and his team on the back for

thinking outside the box and delivering on that there with the Viking cruise. But, you know, those buildings up there sitting empty, now some 60 per cent complete, guaranteed money on the hook by the previous Government that they remain silent about and would probably blame us if they really wanted to, presents us with an opportunity to find a way to do exactly what is necessary.

You know, I heard Mr. Cannonier speaking about inward investment and the like. Some people want the inward investment through people, but I would like the inward investment to first start with reaching out to the folk who really appreciate Bermuda who have some real good bucks that can invest in this country. We need to go after them. I have happened to know one or two of them on the golf course in my life, in my travels, and they like Bermuda, many of them, and some of them like yachts and the like. So we have to move in that money circle, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I do believe that that with the yachting initiative that is being mooted for St. George's, it is not just a St. George's initiative you know. Yes, it will benefit us. And, yes, it will dovetail and assist the development of the new hotel that is open and also tie in to the casino licence that is coming under the Gaming Commission, and you know, folks like to throw stones and suggest that the Government . . . but you know, the previous Government sat on their hands in that space, and the current Government, we are doing our part to move it forward. And in some spaces like gaming, you know, sometimes you got to measure twice and cut once.

There are things—you just cannot be a bull in a china shop. And that is one area where I certainly feel it is necessary for us to be a little bit more cautious as we are proceeding. But necessary, absolutely necessary because . . .

You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? When I talk about Morgan's Point and the opportunities that is going to present itself and how I feel golf can play a part and how I feel networking with individuals of high net worth who own superyachts and the like, I certainly feel that we certainly need to appreciate, fully appreciate, that through all of this, this world has been dealing with a crippling pandemic. And yes, there are those who will take a political position rather than a measured position even how we do that.

And yes, I am very sympathetic to the cries in the tourism community right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we need to find ways to make sure that we have greater air lift and the like. But I would encourage folks to listen to the Transport Minister who . . . you know, sometimes he can lead you astray with those dry jokes he chucks out there. But he certainly declares his interest in that that is a space he loves when it comes to air transportation.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

(Misleading)

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: The Honourable Member is misleading the House in saying that I do not have a sense of humour or that I am not funny. I am hilarious.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, and—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I accept that point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I withdraw those comments about his sense of humour.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Member, continue.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I totally withdraw those comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Everybody in Bermuda knows and everybody that listens to the radio knows how hilarious, how much laughter is created is because of the type of jokes that the Honourable Member is able to put forward.

But they do not laugh about his love and passion for the air transportation. I gave him and his team kudos for Viking and bringing the homeporting to a realisation. And that was a good initiative that other countries copied. Let me say that again. That was an initiative that other countries copied because as we were out in front, other countries and other cruise lines then took that initiative elsewhere. And when you start looking at the opportunities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with airlift going to what previously was non-traditional areas for Bermuda, I have listened enough to the Transport Minister on a Wednesday to listen beyond those dry jokes to hear him share how important it is to create an air demand out of Bermuda and how it would help Bermuda connect in a real way to other markets.

I honestly believe the Azores connection that was introduced and other connections that are being worked on that I have been privy to knowing a little bit about are the types of innovation, because you cannot have tourism without transport. He has convinced me of that as well, that you cannot have tourism without transport. Because people have got to get here somehow, and they cannot get in the cars. As a little child I remember, *Oh, boy, when are we going to build the bridge over to New York so I can go to see Aunt Muriel up there in Long Island.* But the bridge will nev-

er come, so we have to find a way to bridge that gap another way. The other way will be by air or by sea.

Do you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I remember talking about sea when all the criticism was coming about that cruise port up in Dockyard. Remember that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the criticism? Where would be without that investment up there in that cruise port? Where would we be? And so sometimes politics can be that way.

You know what? We are going to find a solution, I suspect, for that big island that was built up there. I think that cost us \$40 million, like Morgan's Point, you know. We inherited some situations where some folk put some money into some areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has prevented us from realising and doing the type of things we would like to do in this space.

And no one really was against Bermuda looking at how we improve our airport. But no one suspected that we would give it away so that we are hamstrung. And now I believe the Honourable Minister (he can point-of-order me and give me the correct amount) has probably paid tens of millions of dollars through the Finance Ministry, of course, and made the cheque payable to a company that is not even Bermudian to be able to pay them during this particular period. And I do believe my memory serves me correctly that this arrangement was done and it was not . . . you know, [it was] met with some significant criticism as well.

So I am here to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the tourism front it is not necessary for the Premier to lay everything out. And I want to give some kudos to the former Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Zane De Silva, for his vision to bring the PGA golf event to Bermuda. We have seen Bermuda across the globe on television and the like, and our awareness is growing. And I know even with the reduced amount of people who are coming on cruise ships because of the pandemic, travel to Bermuda is down because of the pandemic. There are more people wanting to come and look at Bermuda, look at Port Royal, as a consequence of it getting global awareness. Now, that awareness did not start at the PGA TOUR Bermuda Championship, now the Butterfield Bermuda Championship. It started with a vision for the PGA Grand Slam of Golf that gave us great awareness that was introduced by former Premier Dr. Brown as a consequence.

Where do we take it from there? Well, infrastructure, as we look to get this inward investment. I mean, just when Viking was here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, former Deputy Speaker Lister and former Chairman and banker, Mr. Clement Talbot, had a very important person from off the Viking ship, taking him around Bermuda. They brought him up to Port Royal and I took them on a little tour. And I took them up to Whale Bay Fort and showed them the vista there. And I said, *This is a vision I hold in my heart*. Not just for

Whale Bay Fort, because that is where Uncle Herman used to teach golf around there. It is called Herman's Corner.—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, let's stay with the Throne Speech Reply. You are going all over the place right now.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, I am bringing it home. Thank you for that.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I am bringing it home.

I was talking about homeporting and how the Deputy Speaker brought some important clients up to the golf course and I showed them the vision of the restoration of not only that fort, but also of Alexandra Battery and also for Martello Tower and other forts around Bermuda to enhance the tourism product for the minibus services that are going to be providing service for the visitors that will come as we look toward the 2021, moving now into 2022, cruise season. And that ties in very nicely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the vision of improving those docks down there in the marina, developing the marina, and the air transportation strategy, and also the cruise strategy where investing in our infrastructure is so important.

So the point I am really trying to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that when you have a Throne Speech that zeros in on what is going to happen in this legislative year, you have to tie it back to your manifesto, if you have a manifesto, and if in fact the manifesto is very important to the political party that you represent. I am here to say that this is certainly the case for us in the Progressive Labour Party. And it did not just start with the current administration, it has been a time-honoured tradition that we look forward to fulfilling in the year and years to come.

I am looking forward with optimism, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I speak to the area of tourism of which I have spent my life. The opportunities for us going forward we must seize. The challenges are definitely there, but I know that you can be assured that we will be working assiduously to do our part in that space, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I only wanted to speak on that particular area this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Are there any further speakers at this moment?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: If there is no one else, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you can continue, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I guess I can wrap it up if you wish.

The Deputy Speaker: Please.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, continue, Premier. I am sorry.

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay. No problem.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will start this evening where many of us have started by thanking our front-line workers and all of those who for the last (I want to say) 19 or 20 months have been doing all of which they can in support of the country's efforts against a once-in-a-century pandemic. And, for me as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank my Cabinet colleagues for their work, contributions and efforts, and the members of the Progressive Labour Party office for their support, for their constructive criticism and feedback, and for their collectivism in making sure that we execute what we were elected to do.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, leadership is not easy, but it is certainly made easier when you have such a strong team. And we have and are blessed with a strong team, many of whom you have heard from during this general debate which we have every year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get into my comments, I do certainly want to touch on something because there is this commentary that, *You know, this was a short Throne Speech and it didn't have any detail and . . .* blah, blah, blah and all those things. You know why I think that is pretty funny, Mr. Speaker? Because the Speech was actually longer than the Speech last year, for the record.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, you know, there is this whole thing about . . . and it is interesting. It is really, really interesting because I remember I had this same discussion last year when we were doing the same debates. I remember [you], Mr. Speaker (I see you are back in the Chamber) a few weeks before the Throne Speech you had given me a copy of old Throne Speeches. And our Throne Speeches are comparatively long.

In the United Kingdom Throne Speeches are not longer than 50 minutes. It used to be that way here. And I said, you know what, we are not going to

try to be all things to all people inside of a Speech. And we are going to make sure that we keep it short, keep it focused.

And there was another criticism from a former Premier no less, which said that the Speeches have become all about legislation. That is what Throne Speeches are for, to lay out the Government's agenda for the parliamentary session. And the agenda inside of Parliament is the passage of legislation, which is the changing of laws, which is the primary function of the Legislature. And it is important for us to note and recognise that when the Governor convenes the Legislature, it is for the Legislature to legislate. And that means changing laws.

Then, of course, there is a criticism that the Speech is lacking detail. This question was asked in a press conference that I held on Monday, Mr. Speaker. And my response at that time was, *If we filled in all the details of all the policy proposals, and all the various things that are contained in our Economic Recovery Plan and the things that Ministers have been working on, the Governor would still be speaking on Monday when she started on Friday.* That is a fact. That is not what Throne Speeches are about.

But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. We have had press conferences this last week and [there will be] more press conferences next week from the Ministers of Government who will be fleshing out the details in a space where not only are they just fleshing out the details in a Speech, but they are there to take questions from the members of the media so they can further elaborate on these items. And it is clear from the debate this evening and the contributions, that Members of the Opposition are not listening to what is being said by Ministers in these press conferences as some of the recommendations that have been put forward to the Government [were] contained either inside of the Speech or inside of intervention from Members, things that Ministers have already mentioned in Throne Speech items and press conferences this week.

I certainly want to make sure that I engage in a spirit of collaboration, Mr. Speaker. But it is vital that if we are doing this job we have to make sure that we are doing it in a spirit of honesty and transparency. And the thing is, Mr. Speaker, when I read the Throne Speech Reply, it was littered with things that are already in place. The Minister of Finance spoke to the fact that duty deferments exist right now, today. But, yet, the One Bermuda Alliance is calling for that to be introduced? Come on, Mr. Speaker, we can do better than that.

Then there is this thing about we need to introduce stamp duty relief for first-time homeowners. That was passed by the PLP 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker. Let's get real on some of this stuff, Mr. Speaker. This stuff is already in place and these are things which are done. And so, yes, I welcome the constructive criticism, but we have to make sure that

the criticism is coming from a space where it is right, it is factual and it is contributing to the debate in the advancement of issues inside of this country.

And, as I said, I want to make sure that we have a civil debate because I appreciate the tone of which the Leader of the Opposition has come with, and I appreciate some of the tones which may have been held because people recognise the country is in a difficult spot. And as was said, unity is going to be necessary and required to get us through. But unity does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we will always agree on everything. What it means is that we should have fierce and strong debate to make sure that we are challenged and make sure that we get the decisions that we are making [and] that there are no unintended consequences, and we move forward to the next thing.

The first page of this Throne Speech talked about changes that have been deferred. Because we spent a lot of time arguing over necessary changes and getting caught up without saying, *You know what? We need to make sure that we press ahead on this.* And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we knew that we had to do when we were elected in 2020, that we had to provide strong leadership, make tough decisions to make sure that we saw this country through the pandemic and beyond.

And there has been much spoken this evening about the speed to which the Government needs to lead. There has been differing opinions from many. The Minister of Finance said it. On one hand there is a criticism that we need to move swiftly and on the other hand saying that we need to be cautious. We are striking down the middle, Mr. Speaker. We know the things of which we can advance quickly, and we know the things which we need to spend a little bit more time on because what we do not want to do is leave a future administration with the mess that was left to this administration from the former Government. Yes, we recognise that our progress has been slow. But that does not mean that we are not pressing forward, Mr. Speaker.

So we look at our Economic Recovery Plan and refer to what I said earlier today, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to still say that. The Government is executing on that plan. And 9 of the 31 initiatives are substantially complete. That is actual, real and tangible progress that will have short-term and long-term economic benefits for this country, Mr. Speaker. And we continue to work on the execution of the other priority initiatives inside of that plan.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but look at . . . and again it is like this doubletalk in its criticism. MP De Silva said it very well in his contribution. He said that inside of this Reply we are seeing that it says, *We believe that there should be fewer items to execute, that the Government should only pick three.* MP De Silva said it right. If we had three, the criticism would be, *Oh, that's not enough. We need more.*

There were 80-something different ideas which came from the platform, which came from members of the public, which came from the Economic Advisory Council. And all of those matters were distilled in a way to come up with the 31 priority projects that would have the biggest impact on the economy and would be the easiest to execute and make sure that those were the things that we could deliver. That is what the Economic Recovery Plan is all about, Mr. Speaker.

And we can do it. We do not need just three. We have already implemented nine! And we are going to complete the rest of the aspects. But if you want to talk about three, Mr. Speaker, let me talk about three things. This is the One Bermuda Alliance's recovery or economic plan: America's Cup, Mr. Speaker, still paying the bill. It goes without remembering that every year in the budget there is a line item for a capital grant for WEDCO which the former Government guaranteed for the paying off of Cross Island, Mr. Speaker—\$4.6 million every single year. And it is still in the Budget Book today.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we know about the situation at Morgan's Point. There is a bill now coming close to \$200 million because of the \$185 million that we had to borrow. We never raised the debt ceiling until we had to increase it to borrow money to bail out . . . not bail out, to pay the guarantee for Morgan's Point. And now with the interest on top of that, it is going to be approaching \$200 million, a guarantee that was given over the objection of the Opposition at the time.

Then we heard about the airport project, and the Minister of Transport laid out earlier today where we are inside of this guarantee. Still paying the bill, Mr. Speaker, over \$40 million on a project we did not support, a project that was not the right priority at the time, especially when we were dealing with the critical situation at Tyne's Bay. But yet, we are still cleaning it up.

So, persons are saying, *Well, the economy was bad before the coronavirus.* Well, yes. And our budget picture was worse as well. But we managed to make sure that we did our best to keep it together and to make sure that we could ride through it. Unlike the former Government, who saw debt downgrades, we have not seen that. And in fact, we have seen the opposite that has happened underneath this Government, Mr. Speaker. So that tells you all you need to know about what independent experts think and assess with the Progressive Labour Party Government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to look too much in the rear-view mirror. But it is vital that we understand the constraints which are on this Government. And the constraints are not entirely of our making. That does not mean that we are not up to the task, Mr. Speaker. Because we continue to press through. That is the difficult part of government. Mr. Speaker, I know you know this well, because we need

to work hard every day. Criticism is constant and oftentimes decisions are the worst . . . the best decision out of two very bad choices. But that is what we signed up for, and that is what we are certainly going to press ahead with.

But what I want to state is that we need to make sure that inside of our debate, because the Reply speaks about the need to be (how would I put it, Mr. Speaker) looking and making sure that we do not lose another generation of young people. And I accept that. I accept that completely. But the young people who are looking for an increasing level of debate want to make sure that the increasing level of debate that we have is based upon honesty. So I will, as I have done before and will continue to do, extend an olive branch to Members of the Opposition.

I heard MP Cannonier say earlier today that there are people with billions of dollars over here, and there are people with ideas and monies who can move in right now. If you have those investors, bring them. If you are about the wealth and development of this country, feel free. You have my WhatsApp? Send me a message. I will make sure that my office arranges to meet you and to see what it is. An MP contacted me yesterday that someone was on-Island to visit. I went out of my way to make sure that I took that meeting because that is what we do. Because we want to make sure that we keep running this business and this economy.

But what we cannot do is engage in (as I will call) straw men, building up straw men to attack things. I have heard a lot, Mr. Speaker, about this (how will I say) the support of which we are going to extend to our third sector and communities of faith, Mr. Speaker. That support, Mr. Speaker, is vitally important because they have done so much over this pandemic, [which is], as the Minister who is responsible for Social Development and Seniors has said, *our* challenge. But it is important that if you are going to criticise the suggestions from the Government, recognising that more give support for some of these organisations, especially communities of faith where necessary. And so we are clear, Mr. Speaker, this is not just something the Government dreamt up out of its hat. This is something where these communities came to us asking for assistance. Key point: That is what responsive governments do.

So, Mr. Speaker, after criticising our plan, the response from the Opposition—I am quoting from the Reply—is, “We in the Opposition take a different view. We believe that our third sector partners are doing an excellent job. They continue to fill the voids and gaps left by Government in our communities. Their outreach programmes provide a much-needed safety net for some of our seniors, the vulnerable, the homeless, and some of our young people.”

That is where it ends, Mr. Speaker. Some could be mistaken and waiting for, you know, more. *What is your solution? What is your plan? What is*

your alternative? What would you do differently? That is not what this country needs. We have put forward something. And if the Opposition thinks that they have a better plan, we would love to hear what that is.

But we are being responsive to the calls which have come to us as a Government, recognising that helping agencies need help, and we are going to do our best to provide that help inside of the construct of which we have. Because I promise you it would be really easy if we had an extra \$4.6 million or an extra \$41 million and did not have to borrow \$200 million to fund Morgan’s Point. It would be a lot easier. But we will deal with the hand of which we were dealt.

We want to talk, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is important that we do not make short-term decisions. The work of which we are doing through the Economic Recovery Plan is to benefit people through five, ten and fifteen years. We want to make sure that the foundation we are leaving is for long-term and sustained economic growth. That is the reason why we are investing in critical infrastructure projects, digging up roads all throughout the country, to make sure that our infrastructure can stand up to the future.

But when we talk about future generations, there was one glaring omission inside today’s Reply. Last week in the Government’s Throne Speech we spoke about the critical nature of what is taking place at Tyne’s Bay. Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that this Island, which was an example of waste-to-energy, has to go back to landfilling its waste because our incinerator is unable to be repaired and shut down? Can you imagine?

But the Reply? Completely silent on what is the biggest infrastructure issue that this country faces. Why? It is kind of along the lines of which an MP on my side opined on earlier. When the former Government came in, plans were on the shelf, and they left them there.

Come on now, Mr. Speaker! In 2013/14 critical infrastructure upgrades were meant to be done! They were not done. What did the Government turn its eyes to? The airport. I get it, absolutely. The airport was in need of an upgrade. But if you would put an airport next to making sure we are not landfilling waste and re-creating pond bogs, which one would you have, Mr. Speaker?

We think that we have to have the priorities. They want airports and Morgan’s Point. We are going with community investment and Tyne’s Bay. Those are the things which are critical for the advancement of this country’s future, and that is what our future generations need, a Government that is not going to look at the shiny objects, but at the things that are going to matter in the long term. Investments in education, investments in health care, investments in training—those are the type of investments of which this Government should decide, and that is where our priorities are, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I serve as the Minister responsible for Tourism. And, Mr. Speaker, there was something inside of the speech which spoke about gaming. Gaming is a very complex issue. But we went to the people of this country to be honest and not to build straw men. I am going to read you a quote from the Reply, and it goes like this.

I quote: "It is not lost on the Opposition, nor should it be lost on the people of Bermuda, that there is a possible conflict of interest when the Premier, who is also the Minister of Tourism and has gaming as an amenity in the tourism portfolio, is also responsible for the Ministry that regulates gaming. Why is the Premier and Minister of Tourism also responsible for the Bermuda Gaming Commission? Again, the country and the Opposition want and deserve answers to this very important question."

They go on to suggest something about the Minister of Finance, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, do you know the first time that a Minister of Finance was in charge of gaming in this country? Under this Government. The entire time that the Gaming Commission existed under the former Government, it fell under the Minister responsible for Tourism. This is why I get to, Mr. Speaker . . . it is just the level of disingenuous stuff that we find.

We have to be better! You cannot attack a Government on that basis. Come on, now! It was there. Bob Richards was never responsible for gaming. Never! So let us be honest with the people.

Now, I have said a lot about where I disagree with the Reply. But let me go to places where . . . I am happy to see that the One Bermuda Alliance are now fully on board with FinTech after running it down for three years. The wonderful work that was done by MP Caines, to start, and continued by the FinTech team of which we have brought in. And seeing real growth and real development and real jobs inside this country, Bermuda becoming a leader in this global initiative. So I am happy that they have come on board. But that is the type of future-vision leadership that this Government has provided in so many different areas.

MP Pearman gave some remarks earlier today, and he said something that I do agree with. He said that anyone can make a promise and that you should not make promises that you cannot keep. And he is right, and I could not agree more, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to lead a party that keeps its promises and does the work to ensure that those promises become a reality.

Let us talk about some of the things that are in our Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. We talked about and we made a promise to advance the restructuring of our education system, to phase out middle schools and create signature schools, giving our students more choice and opportunity. Many people have talked forever about a trade school. We are delivering that, Mr. Speaker, keeping our promises that we made and delivering them. We said that we were going to

invest in economic stimulus and invest in training and education, and we have done that.

We kept our promise to invest in the green economy. You hear of things in this Reply talking about the Government fleet should be converted and we should get electric buses. We are already doing that, Mr. Speaker. We are leading on green technology. The Minister, the Deputy Premier, just came back from Scotland leading the Overseas Territories, showing the world our leadership in sustainability and the green economy. Keeping promises that we made to the electorate.

We promised to deliver cannabis regulation. It is something that the party opposite did not support. Yet they criticised the fact that there are not economic opportunities in this country. Mr. Speaker, you cannot make this up! We kept our promise. We kept our promise to make sure that we expanded prescription drug coverage for seniors on FutureCare. That was a promise that this Government had. We kept our promise to regulate the price of prescription drugs, and we did that last year in that session, Mr. Speaker. We kept our promise. We said that there are issues in the modern age about revenge porn and other items, and we kept our promise to upgrade and change the Criminal Code.

And we kept our promises as we set in a way and a fashion that was handled well over a string of Ministers starting from the late Walton Brown to Minister Caines to now Minister Jason Hayward, working through the issues related to immigration without rancour, with consultation, with making sure that we get it right. And we kept our promise to modernise Bermuda's immigration policy right now. And we heard a Statement over that on the phase of which we are in right now, Mr. Speaker, while we are continuing to make sure that we protect local Bermudians with moratoriums in a number of work permit categories.

We kept our promise to increase affordable housing with the substantive Minister of Public Works announcing this summer that we are investing money in 17 more affordable units. And we heard earlier today from the acting Minister of Public Works about us keeping our promise to the St. George's Marina. Despite the challenges of which we ran into on this project, unexpected costs, unexpected things, we are keeping our promise because we recognise how important that is. And we will deliver on a master plan for St. George's, Mr. Speaker.

We kept our promise to reform Financial Assistance, which we did in the last session, and there is more Financial Assistance reform coming, as well. We kept the promise of which we made to the young people of this country to implement a youth employment strategy, which I am sure the Minister of Labour will expound on in future times.

We also kept our promise to modernise Bermuda's employment and labour legislation. Not universally supported on one side or the other, but it is a

landmark advance for labour rights in this country, landmark advance for employment rights in this country, landmark advance for protection against sexual harassment and bullying in this country. And that is what this Government is achieving, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that we have supported our small businesses by the BEDC [Bermuda Economic Development Corporation] investing more than \$5.1 million of support for over 287 businesses, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, this Government does not just pay lip service. I agree wholeheartedly with MP Pearman. You should not make promises that you cannot keep. And that is why our Throne Speeches have promises that the Government intends to keep, not pretty and flowery words, but deliverables that we are going to spend our time and energy and sweat making sure that we execute for the people of this country who elected us to do that, Mr. Speaker.

So as I close, and as I close out this debate, what I would encourage all of us to do, Mr. Speaker, is to reflect on the need for us to be unified as we approach the challenges. And as we open up this session of Parliament, it is my hope that on the things which are brought forward, we can have constructive debates and criticism from the Opposition, and constructive ideas so that we can live up to the promise this time. Because it is vital . . . it is *vital* that where we find our country at this crossroads, we are all rowing in the same direction. We cannot—we *cannot*—stand still. We must adapt, and we must be bold, and we must break out of that mould. And sometimes some of the changes of which we have to make will make us uncomfortable. Change itself is uncomfortable, but it is a necessity and a requirement for the future of this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said on Monday, we do not need—we *do not need*—grand ideas, plans and promises. We need to focus on executing the things in front of us. This Government is focused on executing on that mandate. We have a strong and powerful team that is continuing to focus on that execution. We have brought in resources to assist us, and we welcome anyone, whether they be from the Opposition or part of this country, to join into this mission. Because this mission is to make sure that we have social renewal and economic recovery in this country, Mr. Speaker.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Members, that brings the debate which started in the afternoon session on the Throne Speech itself and its Reply to a close. We thank you for your participation.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, may I make my motion?

The Speaker: Ah. We thank you for your participation. And before we move on to the next item, the Premier will put his motion.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the following message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Go ahead, Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, the message reads as follows:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, the Members of the House of Assembly of Bermuda, thank Your Excellency for the gracious Speech with which Your Excellency was pleased to open the present Session of Parliament.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. The information will be forwarded.

Members, we now move on to the next item on the Order Paper, which is item number 2, the second reading of the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your matter?

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

BILL

SECOND READING

CRUISE SHIPS (CASINOS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable House to take under consideration the Bill entitled the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will no doubt be aware of the impact of the global pandemic on various sectors of the economy, of which tourism, and the cruise ship sector in particular, is one. In consultation with the Ministry of Transport and the Ber-

muda Gaming Commission, I invited the Cabinet to approve these amendments to the principal Act to mitigate some of the economic effects of COVID-19 on both the cruise ship industry and our home jurisdiction.

The aim is to permanently enlarge the period of time a licensed operator of a casino on a cruise ship remains valid for vessels making 15 or more voyages to Bermuda to 12 months, and to provide the Bermuda Gaming Commission with discretion to change statutory casino opening hours on a case-by-case basis in response to requests from cruise lines.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that COVID-19 has had an overall devastating effect on the cruise ship industry. The recently announced 19 voyages to the Island in the latter part of our summer months signals that the industry is a significant component of our tourism industry and our economy. Casinos on board cruise ships are added amenities for passengers. Licences will be valid for 12 months from the date of issue for vessels making 15 or more voyages to Bermuda, and for each voyage [for] vessels making 14 or fewer voyages to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will also recall that the Gaming (Transfer of Functions) Act 2021 transferred the responsibility for the licensing of cruise ship casinos from the Minister responsible for lotteries to the Bermuda Gaming Commission [the Commission] as of 1 August 2021. Currently, the statutory framework governing cruise ship casino operations prescribes limited operating hours for a casino on board a vessel while it is berthed in Bermuda. Inserting into legislation discretionary power of the Commission to be able to consider a request to change casino operating hours provides additional flexibility.

Honourable Members should be aware that the request was made to the Commission by a cruise partner during this pandemic season, which of course cruises have to remain in port and have to be tested prior to passengers' disembarking. It was noted that the legislation did not give the authority to the requests, although supported, to be entertained.

The Bill before this Honourable House addresses the issue and provides the necessary discretion to the Commission. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that the Bermuda Casino Gaming Commission, just like the Bermuda Monetary Authority or anything else, operates when it deals with policy matters under the policy advice of the Minister responsible. And in this case and instance, the position of the Government remains that we certainly want people coming off of the cruise ships, but we recognise where we are in this pandemic season that we should be able to offer the flexibility in case a ship may be detained.

Gaming in the onboard casino could be an added activity, a choice for guests awaiting results of COVID-19 tests conducted upon arrival in Bermuda.

Currently, the option of cruise ships is to remain out at sea during the time COVID-19 test samples are collected from passengers, transported to land for testing and results are relayed, thus permitting some guest amenities to remain available.

Mr. Speaker, as I commend this Bill for consideration to Honourable Members, the principle which it sets out is one which will form a critical part of economic recovery for Bermuda—flexibility and speed to market. We will need to listen to our stakeholders and act quickly to ensure that jobs are preserved, new revenue streams realised and economic activity is encouraged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Cannonier, you have the floor.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you very much. And thank you, Premier, for your review.

There is not much really to say to this here. It is sensical. It makes sense in what it is that the Government is attempting to do here. I recognise that this particular incident of being able to extend to the cruise ship its timing for gaming has been something that has been addressed in the past, probably going way back to 2008/09, if my memory proves to be correct.

Really because this is a short Bill and it makes sense, I think the only thing that came to mind with this particular piece of legislation was if we are going to extend it for 12 months, I am still not quite sure where we are going with local gaming as far as hotels and the like, folks who are looking for a licence locally. I would have anticipated that within the next 12 months we should have a casino open with one of the local entities looking to have it up and running.

It would appear to me that there should be a sunset clause here that suggests if we have casinos and cruise ships operating by the time the local casino is up and running within this 12 months, then it should cease and desist. It would be good to hear from the Premier what he thinks about that, because the whole idea of local gaming is to drive that toward the entities and the hotels that are looking to have gaming within them.

So I would have thought that maybe some thought around a sunset clause once the local entity is up and running with its casino, that we would be driving that business toward them and removing the option of the cruise ships. There may be something that I am missing, and I did not hear that in the review. But certainly this Government should be looking at that as an option.

But again and in summary, this is not something that we object to. We believe it is a good measure to take on at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Cannonier.

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

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

The Speaker: MP De Silva. Yes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for bringing this legislation tonight. I would also like to thank the Minister of Transport and the Bermuda Gaming Commission.

You will know, Mr. Speaker, that they have been through some very, very trying times over the past two years. And we have some further trying times yet ahead of us. So this piece of legislation I think is going to go a long way to assisting us with the recovery that is needed, going forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you will remember there was a time when those opposite chastised the Progressive Labour Party for supporting the world cruise industry. In fact, you will remember I am sure when the Progressive Labour Party talked about increasing the cruise visitors to the country and increasing them in significant numbers. You remember the words “hamburgers and sodas” being thrown about [in reference to] our possible cruise passengers. Well, we all know now, Mr. Speaker, that had not this Progressive Labour Party pushed the cruise business over the past 15–20 years, Lord knows where we would be at this particular point in time.

So I thank our forefathers, and I will have to include you in that, Mr. Speaker, because you were part of that forefather group. I would like to thank you for the vision that you and our forefathers of the party in those early days had, because I know you caught a lot of flack for it. But it has been a real lifeline for this country. So I thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, this change. I just want to bring about a few points that I believe are very important. With it, it allows Bermuda to remain competitive, it assures our cruise line partners that we will continue to support them, Mr. Speaker. We have supported them very heavily in the past, and we will continue to support them in every way that we possibly can. On behalf of the Government and the people of Bermuda, I would like to thank the cruise ship lines for their support in the past. And I would like to thank them for this particular piece of legislation being initiated by them.

What it does, Mr. Speaker, is give our tourists, our visitors another choice. It also assures them that if their particular cruise has to be in port for any length of time over the normal, then they will have another

amenity at their fingertips if they so choose it. So hopefully, this news will get across the industry quickly and we will find that the cruise lines I am sure will accept it and have open arms to this change. Let us hope it brings more ships to Bermuda and brings them here quickly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Member Caesar, you have the floor.

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to commend the Premier and his team for bringing this piece of legislation, as we know that we do have some trying times ahead of us. I think that this shows a level of foresight and flexibility and forward-thinking to accommodate tourists and the cruise ships.

We know that as the previous speaker indicated, casinos are an amenity that many cruise visitors like to take advantage of. And with some of the challenges in terms of testing . . . or I would not say *challenges*, but regulations that we have to have in place in order to keep us and cruise ship visitors safe, this goes a long way to showing those cruise ship visitors that Bermuda is flexible, that it thinks of them and that we want them here. And we want them to take advantage of our shores, but we also want them to be able to take advantage of some of the amenities that they have on board as well.

We are trying to be . . . and the tourism industry has noted that . . . and I also have had occasion to have conversation with the Minister of Transport as well, who also would be very intimately involved in understanding how the visitors are traveling to Bermuda. We do know that the cruise ship industry is anticipated to rebound somewhat more quickly than the airlift that we would see in Bermuda. We would love for airlift to rebound more quickly, as well. We have to recognise that people want to see Bermuda. It is a very well-sought-after destination. And I believe that this particular piece of legislation, or amendment to the legislation, will assist in showing that Bermuda is welcoming, it wants to have tourists here. It wants to help to see the tourism industry thrive.

So, whilst it is a very minor piece of legislation, I think it goes to show the cruise ship industry and cruise ship guests that Bermuda wants to have visitors here. We want them to take advantage of the amenities that they have here while they can, and that we are forward-thinking. So again I want to just commend this piece of legislation coming forward. And I

think that it will go well for the cruise ship industry and for tourism in Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Caesar.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? Any other Member? None?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank Honourable Members opposite for their comments and also Members on this side for their comments, MP Crystal Caesar, who works with me in my office and certainly MP De Silva, who has a significant amount of experience with both cruise ships and tourism.

To answer the question that was posed by MP Cannonier, I just want to make sure that no one is under the illusion of what this is really about. This is really about the unique circumstance of which we currently have where cruise ships coming to Bermuda have to wait to be cleared and tested, and have asked to extend the hours of operation of their boats.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the first time that cruise ship gaming was allowed in this country was when the Member opposite was the Premier and the Cruise Ship (Casinos) Act 2013 was actually passed, which gave casinos the ability to have their casinos open ahead of time. Certainly, it is not all the time they were allowed, but they were allowed during certain hours of operation. And so the law itself says that, "A licensed cruise ship shall only operate a casino between the hours of 9 o'clock in the evening and 5 o'clock in the morning when the cruise ship is berthed in a designated port."

I think what is important to note, Mr. Speaker, as I said inside the brief where we have ships which during this time period may have to be in port during those hours when people cannot get off the cruise ship, versus in other times we want people to get the cruise ship where they cannot get off the cruise ship to allow the flexibility for those hours to be varied of opening. So I think that is the critical point. It is not universal. We are not changing it entirely. It is just for these unique circumstances where applications can be made, and it is based upon policy of which may be agreed between the Government and the Gaming Commission.

So I just want to make sure it is clear so when we are talking about issues of sunset clauses, et cetera, that might be something that may be able to be considered in the future, certainly. But it is not something now. This is literally just about allowing the flexibility for hours to be extended in these particular cases.

I just want to make sure that that much is clear for Honourable Members and certainly members of the listening public.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy.

House in Committee at 10:40 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CRUISE SHIPS (CASINOS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Cruise Ships \(Casinos\) Amendment Act 2021](#),

Premier, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 3 if I may.

The Chairman: Continue.

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

Mr. Chairman, clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 6 of the Act to widen the period during which a cruise ship casino licence remains valid from one cruise ship season (1 April to 30 November) to 12 months, in respect of a cruise ship which makes 15 or more voyages to Bermuda. This clause also widens the renewal period of such a licence for a further 12-month period or any part thereof.

Clause 3 amends section 11 of the Act to provide for additional periods during which a licensed cruise ship casino may operate. Such periods are to be determined, as a condition of the licence, by the Bermuda Gaming Commission but only after receiving a request in writing at the same time of an application being made for a cruise ship casino licence.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 to 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 to 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1, 2 and 3 approved.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.
I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

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

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

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

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and approved without amendment.]

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

House resumed at 10:41 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CRUISE SHIPS (CASINOS) AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.
Members, are there any objections to the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?
There are none.
It has been reported as printed.

[Pause]

The Speaker: We will move on.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Excuse me, Members, for the hesitation. The next item on the Orders for this evening is the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021, which is being carried over.

The last item is the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021.

I am being informed that I need to ask your indulgence because it is not on the list of items that I was given that were being done this evening. So I am going to seek your indulgence because, as I am reading a note here, it is time-sensitive.

Am I correct there?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, yes. The Public Health Emergency does expire on November 29. This will enable it to go to the Senate so that it can be extended by that time. I am sorry that this was not relayed to your office. It was discussed in our caucus. So I will need to check to see the reason why it was not checked.

The Speaker: Okay. I just had verified my list, and I did not see it on my list.

So, Members, I am assuming the Opposition were made aware that it was going to be done.

Mr. Scott Pearman: We were, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. And there is no objection?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister Hayward, are you going to be presenting it?

Hon. Jason Hayward: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be given the draft Order entitled Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Proceed, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 6) ORDER 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable Chamber to consider the Order entitled [Public Health \(COVID-19\) Emergency Extension \(No. 6\) Order 2021](#).

Mr. Speaker, Members will be aware that the current Health Emergency Order is scheduled to lapse on 29 November 2021. The Emergency Order, which

has been in place since 30 June 2020, following the state of emergency put in place on the 1 April [2020] was made pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and declared that a public health emergency exists in Bermuda due to a communicable disease that poses a threat to the Island.

Mr. Speaker, we live on a very small Island, and we know from previous outbreaks that the coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19 spreads quickly and negatively impacts the whole community. We can slow the spread of the virus by following basic health advice of wearing a mask to cover our nose and mouth, as well as social distancing, downloading the WeHealth Bermuda app and avoiding the three Cs—closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate in that the COVID-19 vaccine is available to any resident who wants it. As a reminder, this includes booster vaccines for those who are 50 and older, as well as for health care workers, essential and critical service workers, those with chronic conditions between the ages of 12 and 49, and pregnant women. To receive a booster, you must have had your second dose at least six months prior. To make an appointment for a first, second or booster jab, go to gov.bm.

As has been said many times, vaccines save lives. The two-dose Pfizer vaccine has been shown to be 95 per cent effective in randomised trials. Even with the highly transmittable Delta variant, the vaccine's effectiveness remains high. What does this mean? It means that while you as a fully vaccinated person can still test positive and still contract COVID-19, you are less likely to get severely ill. You are less likely to end up in the hospital, and you are less likely to die. Our own data have shown this to be true.

Mr. Speaker, this does not mean that there is zero risk involved. Even if fully vaccinated, your own personal health is a key factor in determining whether you will get ill with COVID-19, and, if you do, whether you are predisposed to becoming ill enough to be hospitalised or die.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear we must all learn how to live with COVID-19 because it will be with us for a long time, both locally and globally. However, as stated earlier this week, success in dealing with COVID-19 requires a community effort. It is a community effort because it is one of the few situations where an individual's decision to adhere to public health measures or not impacts us all. In this pandemic, individual decisions can and do have Island-wide consequences.

This is not the same as choosing not to wear a helmet or choosing not to use your seatbelt where the person you are most likely to harm is yourself. Failure to follow public health measures has a far greater impact as the virus spreads quickly throughout our Island home, affecting families, schools, businesses and more.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has consulted with the Chief Medical Officer and determined that a communicable disease of the first category, namely COVID-19, and its variants of concern continues to pose a dire threat to public health in Bermuda. To control and contain the spread of the infection, public health measures such as those provided for in regulations made under section 107B of the Public Health Act 1949 will continue to be relevant and necessary beyond 29 November 2021.

This Order before us now will extend the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Order 2021 made under section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and empower the Governor to continue the provision of the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Powers Regulation 2021, which imposed extraordinary measures necessary in the interest of public health to prevent, control and suppress COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 5) Order 2021 was made under the affirmative resolution procedure effective 30 September 2021 for 60 days, expiring on 29 November 2021. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage on globally, and a public health emergency continues to exist on our Island.

Therefore, in accordance with section 107A(3) and (4) of the Public Health Act 1949, I bring the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021 to this Honourable Chamber to seek approval for the extension of the public health emergency for a further 60 days ending on 28 January 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister, thank you to the Minister of Labour for presenting this Extension Order on behalf of Health.

Minister, we would have three questions for the Government, and I appreciate your holding the brief for the Minister of Health. No doubt these are matters that have been discussed in Cabinet and ones that hopefully you can help assist us on and the general public.

The first question I would have is, What are the criteria for deciding whether or not to have an extension of emergency powers, whether it is needed or not needed? So what are the criteria that you are applying to the extension to decide whether or not to make an extension?

The second question we would have is, Has this extension been specifically decided to go through

to January 2022 based on the medical assessment, or is this just an extension of 60 days because extensions so far appear to be routinely 60 days? So the question is, Is this just a routine 60-day extension, or is it based on some sort of medical assessment to January 2022?

The third and final question that we would have for the Government is, At what point do you envisage these extensions of emergency powers coming to an end? What is going to change where we no longer need to wield emergency powers?

In respect to the extension order, we would simply point out as we have done in the past that Parliament is in session. We are going to be sitting in November and December; we can return at the drop of a hat. We have been here before. We absolutely recognise and agree that we must trust in the science and be governed by it. And I am sure the Honourable Minister would agree with me about that and agree with the Opposition about that.

The Honourable Minister may also agree that emergency powers should only be as narrow as possible and no wider than is needed in the circumstances.

We note the Government has pressed for vaccinations, and the world has as well. And it has occurred to protect people against a deadly virus. But it has also occurred to try to allow people to return to as normal a life as can be achieved. And we note that the Opposition has been supportive of the Government in those goals and in respect to vaccination. As the Shadow Health Minister said in the Throne Speech Debate earlier, Bermuda has the tools to manage the virus. I would respectfully chip in with my view, which is, above all, what we need now is consistency—consistency so people can plan their lives and then live their plan.

In any event, that is all we have to say on the extension order. I would be grateful for such answers to the three questions as the Honourable Minister of Labour can provide. I do appreciate that he is holding the brief for the Honourable and Learned Minister of Health.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? None other?
Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Honourable and Learned Member who provided intervention.

I will attempt to answer the brief questions based on the information that was provided to me. The Chief Medical Officer and the Minister of Health did engage in dialogue. And they have determined that a communicable disease of the first category,

namely COVID-19, and its variants remain a concern in Bermuda.

They believe that COVID-19 and its variants pose a severe threat to public health in Bermuda. In order to control and contain the spread of infection, it is believed that the extension to the emergency powers and the Public Health Emergency Order 2021 be extended.

Sixty days is not a normal timeframe. But what I have been informed is that if you were to set it at 30 days, Parliament will not be sitting and reconvene for an extension. As a result, the Order has been pushed to 60 days recovery period in this Parliamentary sitting.

The third question in terms of, When do we believe we will not need further extensions? That determination will have to be made by the Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer when they believe that COVID-19 and its variants no longer remain such a severe threat to Bermuda.

I hope that answers the questions that the Member has, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Okay.

With that said, can you just close the matter then for us?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: No objections?

There are no objections. The said letter will be sent to the Governor.

[Motion carried: The Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Speaker: Members, that brings us to a close of the Order Paper for today. We will have the third reading for the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021. And I believe the Deputy is going to do it for the Premier.

Deputy Premier.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none, continue, Deputy.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****CRUISE SHIPS (CASINOS)
AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

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

I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Cruise Ships (Casinos) Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: That brings us to a conclusion of the business for today in its entirety other than one item to be done.

Deputy, would you like to move that for us?

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I do move that the House do now adjourn to November 26.

The Speaker: Is there any objection to that?

No objection.

Does any Member wish to speak to that?

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

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker.

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

The Speaker: It sounds like I hear your voice there.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, I am still awake.

The Speaker: Okay. Deputy Speaker, you have your 20 minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, several days ago two young men were killed—

The Speaker: Just to remind you to put your camera on.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Oh, I am sorry.

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: I have done what I am supposed to do. I do not know what happened.

The Speaker: There you go. We see you now.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes. Okay.

The Speaker: We see you in that red-and-blue tie, right?

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, red and blue certainly in the wintertime.

[Laughter]

DR. EWART BROWN—COST OF POLICE INVESTIGATION

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Several days ago, Mr. Speaker, two young men were killed in a popular restaurant in Hamilton. Mr. Speaker, that brings the total gang-related deaths to 69. Our young men are cannibalising themselves, Mr. Speaker, and this really saddens me. Mr. Speaker, there is no vaccine, there is no ivermectin, no mask or social distancing that will cure these heinous acts of aggression.

Mr. Speaker, sadly, this behaviour affects our children, our families, parents and the reputation of Bermuda as a whole. Remember, Bermuda is only 21 square miles. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the behaviour we see today is the effect of racial discrimination and slavery. Some think, I believe, that once the freedom was announced in 1834 after hundreds of years of being shackled, everything would be forgotten. Life does not work like that. Our young men and women need assistance, Mr. Speaker. We need to invest more funds into our youth.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have no money. We understand the constraints of the budget during this pandemic. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we do not have funds is because over the last 10 years Government House has initiated an investigation of Dr. [Ewart] Brown and spent \$10 million on one man.

Mr. Speaker, I can recall the Auditor General having stolen police files in his possession. There was no investigation. Why Mr. Speaker? But yet we continue to investigate Dr. Brown, a former Premier, one who brought fast ferries to Bermuda, JetBlue, American Airlines flights out of Miami, free education at the Bermuda College, FutureCare for the elderly, and has been said earlier today, the transformation of Dockyard—

[Audio skip]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: [INAUDIBLE] financially.

Mr. Speaker, if we did not do that project, we would have received only a couple of thousand cruise ship passengers because cruise ships are no longer the size that can fit into Hamilton Harbour. And, Mr. Speaker, let me remind people that despite all of the criticism of doing the job at Dockyard, any extra money that had to be spent was taken to Parliament to be approved. And let me add, Mr. Speaker, that the Dockyard took in enough revenue within three years to pay off what we paid to transform that into a mega-ship terminal.

Mr. Speaker, some of us do not remember that in 2008 Premier Brown went to Government House on two separate occasions and spoke to the chief occupant about bringing in a system to deal with the gang culture in Bermuda. Those requests were denied both times by the chief occupant. Mr. Speaker, I can recall some months later reading an article in the paper when Prime Minister (at the time) Cameron of the UK was asked, how he was going to deal with the gangs in the UK, he said, *I'm going to the United States seeking help*. Mr. Speaker, I believe because those requests were denied by the chief occupant at the time, Government House must take some responsibility, major responsibility in the deaths of most of those 69 people.

Mr. Speaker, I will venture to say that if it were [white] young men killing each other, the approval would have been swift. Then they wonder why 97 per cent of our inmates in our jails are Black—because they do not investigate white folks, most of them, particularly if they are related to the PLP.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this. I really believe that we, the Government, we have some control and we have some say in whether these investigations go on any further because it is we who control the government purse, not the FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office].

Mr. Speaker, let me say the two charges that Dr. Brown is up on. One is having a contract with Lahey Clinic to have doctors from the Lahey Clinic to come and examine patients in Dr. Brown's office, using Dr. Brown's staff. That is not free. Mr. Speaker, we have the same thing now in Bermuda. There are a few doctors who have arrangements with hospitals in North America to come to Bermuda. They are not being charged. Why not? If Dr. Brown is going to be charged for having a conflict with Lahey to have their doctors examine people in his office, then the other people should be charged.

Mr. Speaker, the other charge is donations. What the charge is basically saying (I am saying in my layman's terms) is if you donate money to the Progressive Labour Party, then you cannot do business with the government. Mr. Speaker, as you probably know, donations to the political parties in the UK are commonplace. Getting contracts via those donations is commonplace in the UK. It is not unlawful there; it is not unlawful here. But it is the narrative that the Gov-

ernment House are putting on Black men in Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, you have been in Parliament much longer than I have, there was a time that Black firms could not get contracts from the government for over £300,000. Well, when we took Government in 1998 under the leadership of Dame Jennifer Smith, that was changed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking that all charges against Dr. Brown be dropped. Dr. Brown does not need me to defend him. He has got lawyers doing that. But I am just a parliamentarian from the Bible Belt seeking justice [for a man] from persecution and eventually prosecution from Government House, spending taxpayers' money, money that we so badly need right now.

We have many of our folks who cannot afford medicine and food and rent. And the FCO has spent \$10 million of our taxpayers' money. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that \$10 million . . . had we invested \$1 million a year in those troubled young people, what production would we have gotten out of them as far as training them into a trade? That is where that money should have gone, training our young people. Instead of denying assistance from overseas, having somebody come in and put programmes together, train these young people to be productive citizens.

No. I guess killing each other is okay by some, Mr. Speaker. It is not okay with me, Mr. Speaker, and it will never be. I am calling on our Government to stop financing the DPP's [Department of Public Prosecutions] Office and drop these frivolous charges against Dr. Brown.

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS RE: IVERMECTIN

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, on another issue, I will always be against discrimination whether it is to me or whether it is to others. I have been fighting discrimination all of my life. And I know there are some medical protocols in place for the pandemic of COVID-19. And I am not knocking any of that. I think the protocols that I know about are certainly serving a useful purpose. I am not a doctor, so I am not going to even try to advise there. But I do know, Mr. Speaker, that there are some doctors in Bermuda who are not following the protocols recommended by the health professionals who are advising Government. These are medical practitioners licensed in Bermuda. And even though they are not following the protocols that the Government has put in place, these doctors have had reported successes with the protocols that they are following.

But we have some in Bermuda discriminating against them, because if these doctors prescribe ivermectin to their patients, the insurance companies will not pay for that. This is a medication that they paid for before. Why would they not pay that now? The insurance companies cannot or should not be telling doctors how to treat their patients regardless of

whether the doctor is telling them to take the vaccination or another protocol. It should never happen.

I am asking that the Government under the Health Ministry advise the insurance companies—they must pay for medications that are prescribed by doctors whether they are for or against them. But they must. Because if medication is one of the benefits in their premiums, then insurance companies should be paying for it. I am totally against discrimination of any kind. And this is one I take strongly because it should never happen. These medical practitioners who are not following these protocols are still practicing physicians in this country. So we cannot treat them as if they have no standing, no medical standing in this country.

I know one doctor who helped rest homes out, and they had no vaccination. And they did not have any problems down there, lost no patients, did a good job, and are reporting success with their protocols that they followed in treating people with COVID-19.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am again asking that the Government, via the Health Ministry, advise insurance companies that they have no right to be discriminating against doctors who prescribe ivermectin for their patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

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

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

The Speaker: I hear a voice. You need to turn your video on now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will get it.

The Speaker: MP De Silva, you have your 20 minutes.

DR. EWART BROWN—COST OF POLICE INVESTIGATION

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

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to echo my supporting sentiments to what Deputy Speaker Derrick Burgess just mentioned with regard to our young men and the amount of money that could possibly have been spent on education, trades or what have you. Of course, that list could be 10 miles long what we could currently do with that \$10 million, Mr. Speaker. And I would just like to say that I am in full support of MP Burgess's comments. I think it is high time that we as a Government forced the hands of those who want to continue this witch-hunt, in my opinion.

What has recently been brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker, is that having been a recipient of an

investigation, what this does to one financially. Mr. Speaker, for those who do not know, once the police decide to do an investigation on a Member of Parliament, it is very, very, very difficult for that person and their immediate family, and sometimes their friends, to continue to get support from financial institutions to carry on their business. And I can only imagine how hard it has been on Dr. Brown if he has been going through this for the last 10 years. It is not right. And as Dr. Brown himself said years ago, *If you have something that you wish to charge me for, do it.* And his words *Pee or get off the pot* were used several times. And of course we know that recently charges were laid.

My hope is that the pandemic does not delay it much further and that we can get on with it. Because I am sure that at the end of the day he will be exonerated. But my heart goes out to him and his family because when one has the experience of it, he who feels it knows it. So my sentiments go out to him and his family. I thank MP Burgess for bringing this to the fore yet again, and it must be something that we have to continue to fight against because it is not right. And it is what one might call *economic terrorism*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP De Silva.

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

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening, Minister.

HISTORY OF BERMUDA (HOLIDAY MAGAZINE, CIRCA 1947)

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity this evening . . . I know it is a bit late, but I thought it would be very important to share. I came across this book called *Holiday Magazine*. And it is actually a magazine that was done back in April of 1947. The article in the book, this magazine, Mr. Speaker, and please if you can allow me to read from this magazine?

[No audible response]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Let me just give a bit of perspective. It is a magazine that was written; I guess the publisher is in Canada. And they did a specific article on Bermuda, the old families who own it and run it. And

those families whom this article speaks of are Butterfield, Spurling, Watlington, Trimmingham, Gosling, Darrell, Tucker, Smith, Cox and Trott. It is a very interesting article, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks from a white person's perspective in regard to Bermudians and tourists in Bermuda. And if you allow me to just read a bit, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, go ahead. You can read it.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you.

It speaks to the tax structure back in 1947. And it says, "The tax structure is probably the simplest to be found in any civilised community. And both American and English men are amazed and envious, and they learn that Bermuda is one without any direct taxation except for a few shillings a year paid in parish real estate taxes. The highest parish assessment is five shillings and sixpence per £100 assessed value or \$1.10 for each \$100 of assessment. There are no income taxes, no land, gift, death, capital or inheritance taxes, and no personal property tax. Yet the budget is usually balanced because the customs tariff, the principal source of revenue, is revised annually to fit anticipated expenditure for the following year. There is now some agitation for an income tax, but even its sponsors disapproved the theories of direct taxation for Bermuda." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

I thought that was an interesting piece to share in regard to what the tax structure looked like back in the 1940s. And I am sure that afforded some opportunities to not have to pay taxes like we do today. This was an interesting piece in this magazine, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to the impression of most visitors when buying in shops in Bermuda. Keep in mind this was back in the 1940s.

It says that, "It is quite possible that the man who wraps up a bottle of whiskey for you might be a retired Royal Navy commander; the courtly clerk who fits you with a tweed sports jacket may be a Rhodes Scholar and an Oxford Blue. Your milkman may be a power in the Colonial Government, and the man who furnishes you with baggage tags in the steamship office may be a portrait painter and linguist. The fact that there is little ambition among young Bermudians in most cases to aspire to fame and fortune would mean leaving their exquisite island home, which they are reluctant to do." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

I find it interesting that back in 1947, the narrative would still be the same today for Bermuda and Bermudians in regard to the ambition that young Bermudians have. And usually you would hear people saying when it comes to employment, *Oh, Bermudians are lazy*, that [same] language was [being] used in the 1940s.

Now this, Mr. Speaker, was very interesting. So if you allow me to read, "In spite of almost invariable courtesy visitors receive from the Islanders, an Englishman once remarked that Bermudians tolerate

Americans, despise the English and hate themselves. This is a hyperbole, of course, but Bermudians do not make it easy for outsiders to settle among them. If one wants to buy a house here, he must first memorialise the Governor in Council. This august body will then check up on his race, profession, bank accounts, in fact his whole dossier. His name will be published in the local press just in case somebody might object to having him around. Finally, with everyone satisfied that he is a desirable person, permission may be granted—or not, for no reason need be given for the rejection of this petition."

And this was done particularly for a person who wanted to buy property in Bermuda. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker, that your name would be put in the paper or put in some sort of published document that would get people to object to whether or not . . . you know, it speaks to your race, your profession, your bank accounts. And people would object based upon whether or not you were a desirable person. I could see back then, Mr. Speaker, how that would cause lots of discrimination amongst our people.

Mr. Speaker, actually I tried to find a piece in here that speaks to back in 1947 what the composition of persons was by way of race.

[Pause]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Anyway, I am going to skip that. It really just went on to say that back in 1947 when the majority . . . you know, you could not vote unless you had property.

And it spoke to how there were about 1,600 white voters and 1,300 Black voters. So the article was just saying how Black people would vote in the Government of the day, and that they equally had wanted the Government which they had chosen because of the number of Black voters that they had. I found that to be very interesting, an interesting scenario, the fact that this would be back in 1947. And it just goes to show that there were Black people who supported the Government of the day if we are talking about such small numbers of voters.

There was an interesting fact in here as well about Cup Match. We often have the conversation about whether or not Cup Match is the holiday that was supported by Black people or white people. In this particular article, it says, "Among the Negro population, cricket is a favourite sport. And the Bermudian Negro is a keen and capable player. His big day comes with the annual Cup Match between St. George's and Somerset played by coloured teams. It is a two-day affair run like a carnival. Most of the coloured population will give up their jobs rather than miss it because there is no real poverty among them."

"There are few signs of real unrest amongst the coloured people. Many a Negro, rather than take a full-time job, will hire out as a gardener or boat repairer for a couple of days a week in order to earn enough

to buy his rum and tobacco, spending the remainder of the time taking his food from the sea and a tiny vegetable patch beside his cottage. An American visitor interested in the labour situation asked a coloured mason who was putting in a wall if he had ever worried about losing his job. And the man chuckled and replied, 'No, sir. When I start worrying about my job, I just quit.'" [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

I encourage any of my colleagues who are interested in seeing this magazine to let me know. I just found that it was very insightful in regard to what Bermuda looked like back in 1947. You know, being that we are talking about economics we could all imagine what a head start people, white people, would have had, particularly these old families who owned and ran it. And I would think today that it is still the case. So I just wanted to share that, Mr. Speaker, with my colleagues.

I am sorry I cannot find the actual bit that I wanted to share. But I just thought that it was an interesting read, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. Are you seeing me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I hear you. I am waiting to see you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: You do not see me?

The Speaker: There you go. I see you now.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, just some proof I am greeting you from the very cold island called England. I am out here looking for a new manager for Manchester United.

[Laughter]

PLP GOVERNMENT HELPING PEOPLE OF BERMUDA MOVE FORWARD

Mr. Christopher Famous: I want to thank Minister Furbert for that interesting history lesson. I would really love to see that.

Mr. Speaker, there is a saying which I think even Somerset people know: *Less is more*. Have you ever heard that, Mr. Speaker?

[No audible response]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The less big promises that you give to people, the more you can focus on what you have to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, as MP De Silva said earlier, you are one of the . . . I will not say founding fathers, but I guess you would say child of the founding fathers. One of the ethos of our party, the Progressive Labour Party, is that we are a bottom-up party. That means our manifesto, our priorities, our agenda are chosen by our members, as MP De Silva spoke about earlier. Then they are chosen, I will say refined a bit, by our caucus. Anyone who is a PLP member, or PLP MP, knows that both the CC process and the caucus process are a fine filter. So by the time it even reaches legislation or potential legislation, it has been filtered.

So when people speak about our list of priorities, we already went to the people about this. We did not just come up with this by ourselves. This is what we gained through [fewer] high promises, and more—

[Audio skip]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Now let us talk about COVID-19. In Holland (the Netherlands), they instituted a three-week lockdown because of the rising COVID-19 figures. Germany is considering the same because they share a border. And I'm here in England. It is very hard to find one wearing a mask. So the question is, How long before England goes into lockdown? But of course we are the stupid ones, according to some people, because we actually have regulations to try and protect our people from catching COVID-19, dying and/or messing up our economy.

But nevertheless, I will move on from that, Mr. Speaker. Everywhere else in Europe is looking at lockdown, but Bermuda, the people have demanded that we look beyond COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have the need for fancy slogans. We do not have the need for fancy statistics. Because they probably do not buy into slogans, and they really do not buy into statistics. What they buy into is action. Mr. Speaker, what we have in our party, yourself included, is 35 dedicated individuals, people who are not only elected or appointed, but most importantly they are committed.

Mr. Speaker, in your role as Speaker, you had to divest yourself of party affiliation, which I remember you saying it would hurt you. But you have committed yourself to being one of the best Speakers of the House in the Overseas Territories, if not . . . you are probably the father of the Overseas Territories Speakers at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. We have Deputy Leader Roban, a lover of the environment, who just left England today after spending nearly two weeks in Scotland leading the Overseas Territories in our desire to keep our environment safe and clean for future generations. No one has to ask if he really is dedicat-

ed to the environment. This man lives and breathes for the environment. Mr. Speaker, earlier today we heard from the Finance Minister. Many might not understand fully all the jargon that he says. But he does his best to break it down to us. But no one can doubt his commitment to getting the best deals for Bermuda even if it means telling Ministers no.

You have Minister Tinee Furbert, who just spoke. No one can doubt her commitment to the seniors and the women and the children of Bermuda. Deputy Speaker Burgess is dedicated to the workers. Even at times when it means that we do not see eye to eye as a party, he is dedicated to the workers. We have Minister Rabain. All the flak he has taken the last four years, he is dedicated to the children's education in Bermuda. Now people are finally seeing the vision that he and others, his team, have tried to lay out. Now, there are hiccups along the way; do not get me wrong. But people are buying into the overall vision of transforming our education.

We have another person. They say his name is MP Dennis Lister III. You may have heard of him. He is dedicated to safe driving. Unfortunately, we have lost lives. But I am sure his insistence has helped to save lives. That is his passion, his community there. We have MP Swan dedicated to all things golf. MP Caines dedicated to his constituents in Devonshire. Senators Arianna Hodgson and Lindsay Simmons dedicated to encouraging all of us. Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on about each one of these individuals. But here is the bottom line, Mr. Speaker. When people are passionate about what they do, they do whatever they can for the people of Bermuda.

This is not about holding an office or just collecting a paycheque every month. It is about what we can do collectively and individually to help our people move forward, as Minister Furbert said. Yes, we are a potpourri of personalities. We are not all going to think the same, we are not all going to support St. George's. But we are going to do what we have to do for our people.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, we do not have the time to waste replying to a non-reply because we are too busy working for the people. Mr. Speaker, less is more.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Famous, for keeping it brief this evening.

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

The Speaker: MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. This will be my shortest contribution I think of record on the motion to adjourn.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And with your indulgence I will deliver a statement, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Well, let me put it this way. You can make all of the comments you want. In that regard, I would caution that it is probably not best to make a full statement in this particular Order on the business of the day.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you.

The Speaker: But you can make reference to the position that you hold, and we will allow it.

OCEAN VIEW BAR AND RESTAURANT — TRUSTEES TAKE VACANT POSSESSION

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will make representation as Chairman of the Consolidated Board of Trustees. And I am speaking this evening with regard to the Ocean View Bar and Restaurant concession that we, the Consolidated Board of Trustees, now have vacant possession of our premises following a failed tenancy agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we apologise for being unable to offer our restaurant services while we recalibrate. But given the complaints about the conduct of persons illegally occupying our premises that were not befitting of a golf course clubhouse, we endeavour to reorganise in a timely fashion.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the board of trustees were misrepresented by a now-former trustee. Mr. Speaker, we are also owed thousands of dollars in unpaid rent and utilities by our former tenant, who worked in collaboration with a former trustee. For the record, we have referred the matter to the Bermuda Police Service, Mr. Speaker. And we thank the golfing public for their patience and respectfully, Mr. Speaker, ask them to bear with us while we reorganise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes my motion to adjourn this evening as promised.

The Speaker: Okay. It was brief on your behalf. I would again say I will take that as comments rather than any statement that was presented in any formal capacity, because I do not think that it would be an appropriate place to have made a formal statement. But you spoke of a concern; and we know that you spoke as a concern.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes. Yes, thank you. Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It is duly noted as that.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment or contribution under motion to adjourn? Any other Member?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No other Member? Once the Deputy speaks, Members, we close it out because the Deputy opened.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, I am happy to close out tonight, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am recognising the Deputy now. He will be the last speaker.

Deputy, you have the floor.

PLP GOVERNMENT MEMBERS COMMITTED TO TASK AT HAND

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

Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been a full day of debate in the matters of state, the business of this country. Clearly, this House has had its say today. I do not think there is any doubt that Members in this opening session for this parliamentary year are committed to dealing with the business at hand. We are a country that is very sorely in need of the attention that we all as the 36 parliamentary leaders of Bermuda elected by our constituents to sit in this Legislature have been given a task. And that is to take the steps to ensure that Bermuda—a Bermuda that is still gripped by the pandemic, a Bermuda that is dealing with economic challenges, a Bermuda that has clearly experienced social issues coming out of the pandemic and during the pandemic and some of the incidences that we have seen, and even the families who have experienced loss and suffering over the past year and a half—that we as leaders are on paths to set the Bermuda ship on the right sail on their behalf.

As others have, I would like to thank all of those who have been working hard to ensure our health and safety certainly through this pandemic period. Our frontline workers—hospital, fire, police, Regiment, service workers in our hotels, service workers in our grocery shops, wholesalers—who have to continue to work through the period of the pandemic, putting themselves and their families at risk . . . around the world this has been acknowledged. We owe them all an incalculable debt for the work they have done. I am sure many of them have experienced hardship and loss through this period.

But that does not remove the responsibility that we all as legislators have to them and the rest of the community, which is to set the sail of the Bermuda ship right, as many ships around the world, of all of the countries and islands and jurisdictions have all have rough seas and are tied up at some dock somewhere. And the task of all of their leaders is also to set the sail of their ships right. Certainly this Government has been elected and mandated by the people to make the right tough choices to ensure that Bermuda stays on track, that we continue to attract investment,

that we continue to develop our people, that we continue to ensure our youth get educated and to continue to make sure our seniors are taken care of as they have worked hard to earn their maturity and to live quiet and happy lives. And that residents can feel safe and secure as they move about our Island.

This Government has been tasked to ensure all of those things. And we intend to work. And the last two weeks with the Throne Speech and certainly the Reply that was [debated], I am certain that the message that has gone out is that the Government is up to the task and prepared to continue to fulfil the mandate that we were given last year, October, Mr. Speaker, the strongest mandate of any party that has ever been given to sit in this Legislature. Because I am certain, as has been described by the Honourable Member who sits for constituency 11 before me, he has articulated the character and commitment of a number of Members of the Government side. And there are some he did not mention, but there is no doubt and this country should not doubt that every Member who sits on the Government side, and I do also believe even the Opposition, are committed to the work that we have been tasked with.

But I will speak of the character of the team that I am a part of, and I am honoured to be a part of that team. But I am also confident, Mr. Speaker, because of the mix and variety that MP Famous articulated. That mix, that diversity, that strength of age, of gender, of expertise is all bundled up into one direct purpose as the Progressive Labour Party, as a team that is committed to the welfare and development and protection of the people of Bermuda. And in this calendar year, this parliamentary year, we will continue the work that has been outlined by the Throne Speech. But also we know we may have some curveballs thrown our way. We will respond to those curveballs. And we will respond to them in the fine fashion upon which we were elected to serve and which we have already proven and been given a mandate to achieve.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will close by saying I know that certainly the Government is committed to the task at hand, and I am sure that Her Majesty's Opposition is committed to fulfilling their responsibilities as Members of this Legislature as well and in service of their constituents. And we all will enter this new parliamentary year knowing what our purpose and responsibility is to the people of Bermuda.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. Thank you, Members, for your participation today.

And as has already been mentioned, we will stand adjourned until the 26th of November at 10:00 am.

Members, be safe. Stay well. And be close to your families. Look after your constituencies.

Good evening, Members. The House now stands adjourned.

[At 11:48 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 26 November 2021.]

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
26 NOVEMBER 2021
10:03 AM***Sitting Number 3 of the 2021/2022 Session**[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
Ms. Beale, would you lead us in prayer?

PRAYERS*[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]***CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES***[Minutes of 12 November 2021]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.
Members, the House is now in session.
The Minutes have been circulated. Are there any amendments or adjustments to be made to them?
There are none.
The Minutes will be [confirmed] as printed.

*[Minutes of 12 November 2021 confirmed]***MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING****APOLOGY**

The Speaker: There are two announcements this morning.
I have received notification from MP Tyrrell that he will be absent today, and I just wanted that noted because he did notify us.

**OVERSIGHT OF PUBLIC FINANCING AND GOOD
GOVERNANCE FORUM REGISTRATION OPEN**

The Speaker: The second [announcement] is just a reminder of a circulation from the CPA in reference to the Public Accounts Committee, the Oversight of Public Financing and Good Governance Forum that is going to take place next week. It was circulated to all Members.
Members, if you wish to participate in that forum, please register for it.

The Chairman of Public Accounts, Opposition Leader Cole Simons, will be participating in the discussion from one of the panels.

So, feel free, Members, to register for that. That is actually Tuesday at 12:15 pm, Bermuda time. But please register before [then].

Thank you.

Those are the announcements by the Speaker.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: We have papers to be submitted this morning.
The first is in the name of the Premier.
Premier.

**TOURISM INVESTMENT
(THE LOREN AT PINK BEACH) ORDER 2021**

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism in the exercise of the power conferred by section 3(1a) in conjunction with section 5(1a) of the Tourism Investment Act 2017 [as amended by the Tourism Investment Amendment Act 2019].

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The next is in the name of the Minister of Health.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 7) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) Order 2021, proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise

of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next two, in fact, are by the Minister of Education.

Minister, would you like to do yours?

BERMUDA COLLEGE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda College Audited Financial Statements for the Year ending March 31, 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

BERMUDA COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And, Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda College Annual Report 2020/21.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of Papers and Communications to the House.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: Members, we have quite a few this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

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

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

JOINT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL 2021

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware of the annual trek to London made by the heads of Governments of the Overseas Territories to conduct meetings with the Ministers of the UK Government on those issues that impact the peoples of the remaining British colonies.

Mr. Speaker, following last year's virtual meeting, I am pleased to advise Honourable Members that I attended the [Joint Ministerial Council](#) (or JMC, as it is known) for in-person meetings this year and was pleased to have been joined by colleague premiers from other Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda currently serves as the Chair of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (or UKOTA). As such I was pleased to chair a meeting of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association political council as a preface to the JMC, and during which leaders had the opportunity to crystallise those issues on which we would present a united and settled position to the UK Government. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Speaker, there were common experiences shared with respect to the global pandemic and the impact of the coronavirus on our economies.

Mr. Speaker, the meeting of the JMC consisted of a series of sessions on a variety of issues at which were present UK Ministers to lead discussions to the benefit of the Overseas Territories. These sessions included the following:

- Environment and Oceans, led by Lord Goldsmith;
- IMO II Code led by Minister Courts and the UK's Permanent Representative to the IMO [International Maritime Organization], Katy Ware;
- Relationship between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories;
- Economic resilience;
- Law enforcement; and
- Health issues (regarding the COVID-19 and mental health) led by Minister Argar and Ian Cumming, NHS [National Health Service] Ambassador for the Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the sessions were informative and afforded an opportunity to directly address those UK Ministers and officials charged with policymaking and implementation which have direct effect on the Overseas Territories and specifically Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will no doubt recall the tragic death of Sir David Amess, the MP for Southend and Chairman of the Bermuda All-Party Parliamentary Group. I had the opportunity in the company of the Speaker of the House of Commons to lay a wreath in his memory and on behalf of the Government and the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, following the recent changes in ministerial appointments in the United Kingdom, the Minister of State for the Overseas Territories is

Amanda Milling MP. Honourable Members will have seen the media coverage of my meeting with her and the issues we discussed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate for this Honourable House that I took the opportunity to clearly set out the position of the Government of Bermuda on the grant of Assent to Bills properly passed by the Legislature. While it might be a convenient political point for Honourable Members opposite to make this about cannabis and that legislation, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of principle. Bermuda's Constitution is an advanced one and one adopted as a precursor to self-determination. It is the well-honoured convention under that Constitution that Bills passed in the Legislature will not be denied the Assent of the Governor, and as I indicated to Minister Milling, that is our expectation with respect to the legislation on cannabis.

Mr. Speaker, this stance is a necessary one because today it may be a regulated cannabis industry; tomorrow it may well be banking. The Government cannot acquiesce to the delay or denial of those initiatives that will economically empower the people of this country and provide the access to capital that has been historically out of reach for so many.

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of Brexit and the UK's drift away from constructive European Union engagement, Bermuda has been left to its own devices to ensure that our interest is safeguarded in key political centres like Brussels. Following the JMC, I took the opportunity to support the Minister of Finance in bolstering Bermuda's reputation within the European institutions and to meet with broader government and industry stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, I met with William Macfarlane, Director of Economics and Trade at the UK Mission to the EU and discussed the UK–EU and Bermuda–EU relationships post-Brexit, as well as areas where Bermuda and the UK Mission to the EU could deepen connections. This included in the important areas of vaccination certificate equivalence and EU mobility, climate change and follow-up from COP26, and financial services. In addition to meeting with EU policymakers, it is crucial to meet with those whose research and analysis inform those decision makers.

I also met with one of the foremost thought-leaders in Brussels, Karel Lannoo, CEO of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). CEPS is among the most influential European think tanks and among the top 10 think tanks in the world. In addition to producing first-hand research and analysis on EU proposals and regulations of importance to Bermuda, Mr. Lannoo is also a regular speaker in hearings for national and international institutions, and in public and closed-door meetings with high-level actors.

Mr. Speaker, this was an opportunity to discuss Bermuda's broader interests vis-à-vis the European Union, ranging from financial services and Solvency II to innovations within Bermuda's digital assets and renewable energy sectors. This meeting helped identify

potential synergies with CEPS and for future areas of cooperation. And as a note, Mr. Speaker, the Brussels office has also joined as an official member of the Centre for European Policy Studies.

Mr. Speaker, I also attended and delivered a keynote speech at a dinner with government and industry partners based in Brussels, organised by the Government of Bermuda Brussels Office and the British Chamber of Commerce—EU and Belgium. Engagements such as these create multipliers for positive messaging about Bermuda and ensure that thought-leaders and key stakeholders are well informed about the opportunities to do business on the Island.

Mr. Speaker, no visit to the United Kingdom is complete without engaging with Bermudian students who are living and working in England. Two events styled as "Dinner and Dialogue with the Premier" were hosted in London and Manchester [respectively]. Mr. Speaker, it is inspiring to share an evening with the diverse and talented women and men who are committed to their education and, in most cases, to returning to Bermuda to contribute to their native land.

Mr. Speaker, this marks my fourth and most consequential JMC. The urgency that surrounds issues like the impact of climate change on Overseas Territories and the economic impact of the pandemic on such small island states provided a stark backdrop to the meetings and underscored the ongoing need for regional cooperation. In the 20 months since the declaration of the global pandemic, the world has seen the introduction of a global minimum corporate tax and a definitive shift in the approach of the G20 countries to those of us who make a living in the area of financial services. The direct engagement and the importance of safeguarding Bermuda's interests on the UK and EU stages has now taken on new significance as the world seeks to move beyond the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

Deputy Premier, would you like to put your Statement at this time?

BERMUDA'S PARTICIPATION AT COP26 GLASGOW

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to Members of the House and members of the listening public.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide an update of my participation in COP26 (Conference of Parties) held in Glasgow, Scotland. Honourable Members of this House will be aware that I had an opportunity to represent Bermuda at this year's UN Climate Change Conference [COP26 in Glasgow](#) from 31 October to 12 November.

Through our London Office and UK representative, Bermuda holds Chairmanship of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA). UKOTA is recognised in the United Kingdom as the official association which exists to advance the interests of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories, facilitate cooperation between them and promote solidarity. The association demonstrates the collective partnership between the Territories and Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom. As such, the United Kingdom Government facilitated our presence at COP26 as part of the UK delegation overflow, of which Bermuda led a delegation of seven from across the Territories.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour for myself to have led the delegation. Governments of the UK's Overseas Territories are custodians of internationally important habitats which span the globe from the Antarctic to the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. All 14 Territories are at the forefront of the impact of climate change as vulnerable small island states. We are also at the forefront of renewable energy; nature-based solutions; adaptation and resilience; ocean protection; and, with global leadership in catastrophic risk reinsurance, climate finance. Together with the UK, the Territories represent the world's fifth-largest marine estate of which 75 per cent is protected, containing over 90 per cent of the UK's biodiversity. We recognise that we are vital to the UK's meeting its pledge by 2030 to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans.

Bermuda is not immune or isolated from the impacts of climate change. Our Island is exposed to rising sea levels, increasingly severe and frequent storms, and to changes in ocean currents and weather patterns. Isolated, beautiful and unique, Bermuda is home to the most northerly coral reef system in the Atlantic Ocean which is a critical habitat for marine biodiversity as Bermuda is the only landmass in the Sargasso Sea, a floating rainforest of Sargassum seaweed that is a home and spawning site for several species of threatened and endangered marine wildlife. We are a treasure trove of environmental wealth, a capital of ocean conservation and a key player on the global stage of financial risk management.

As an Island community vulnerable to the effects of climate change and as a global capital of climate-related financial risk management, we are determined that Bermuda will participate in the international response to ensure our collective safety and prosperity. To that end, we continue to declare that Bermuda is committed to increasing our protection of our fragile ecosystem, reducing our carbon footprint and mitigating the impact of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, we are particularly proud of the work being done under the auspices of the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme, which will manage the marine spatial planning. The marine spatial planning will develop and legally adopt an enforceable, comprehensive EEZ-wide plan designed to sustainably manage resources and protect 20 per cent of Bermuda's

waters as a no-take fisheries replenishment zone. Our ambition looking forward is to be a thriving Blue Economy with the diversification of our national revenue and to strengthen our sustainable use of our ocean resources and economic growth, with improved livelihoods and jobs and continued ecosystem health.

Mr. Speaker, all of Bermuda's success and ambition in fighting climate change were featured at COP26. I had the pleasure of chairing an Overseas Territory event in the UK Pavilion on Nature Day entitled "Our Vision for Healthy Oceans." The event, organised through UKOTA together with the UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), was thematically focused on raising awareness, protecting our oceans and how the Overseas Territories are taking action against climate change. The event importantly featured a powerful video collaboration of all of the Overseas Territories, highlighting how climate change impacts our marine life and sustainability. If any Honourable Member has not had the opportunity to see the video, I strongly encourage viewing this video, which can be found on the UK Government YouTube channel.

Mr. Speaker, immediately after the event, I met with the UK Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment, the Right Honourable Lord Zac Goldsmith, who later acknowledged, "What these leaders are doing is simply heroic. Our overseas territories are protecting an area of water bigger than India. It's one of the best Conservation wins of my generation." Lord Zac Goldsmith's acknowledgement went further with commitments in the Joint Ministerial Council [JMC] in which the Premier, subject of the Statement he made today, presided as President of the UKOTA Political Council. The UK Government committed to working closely with Overseas Territory Governments where technical expertise was requested, and to prioritise climate change and environmental issues in future funding for the Territories.

The Overseas Territories committed to continuing to formulate ambitious climate targets and policies. As Honourable Members of the House will note, last week I announced that Bermuda is the first Overseas Territory to participate in the UK Government's Blue Shield Programme, which supports the implementation of a comprehensive monitoring and surveillance regime within our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Mr. Speaker, while in Glasgow, I also participated in two other events. I was a guest speaker at the Bermuda Business Development Agency (BDA) luncheon, which was hosted by HUB Culture. I was also a guest panellist on Island Innovations Webinar@ COP. In London, we held an event with the BDA and the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers (ABIR) to speak further to invited guests, including members of non-government organisations [NGOs] and environmental investment companies.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work achieved at COP26 in terms of heightened recognition within the

UK and international community on Bermuda's efforts and success in this space. We agreed that a greater level of engagement will continue for all Overseas Territories including at future conventions of biological diversity and climate change summits. Our efforts attracted the attention of and were welcomed by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge at the JMC. His Royal Highness stated: "I am pleased the Overseas Territories were represented at COP26 and you were able to voice not only your concerns, but also your efforts to tackle the immense problems that you face."

Mr. Speaker, the work continues, and our partnership with the UK and our fellow Overseas Territories in tackling climate change and accessing international funding is at the forefront of this Government's work.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to recognise the stellar work of the London Office, Ms. Kimberley Durrant and her team, in organising UKOTA's participation in COP26. Through the efforts of Ms. Durrant, UKOTA had the highest number of participants that it has ever had the opportunity to [host at] a COP event. She worked tirelessly to ensure that our schedules, the videos, and the Nature Day event were well organised.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker. And good morning, colleagues.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

BERMUDA COLLEGE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT, 2021 AUDITED STATEMENTS AND 2021 STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise before this Honourable House to lay the [Bermuda College 2020–2021 Annual Report and its 2021 Audited Financial Statements](#), as required under section 8(2) of the Bermuda College Act 1974. I will also give a report on the Government's \$300,000 annual grant and the College Promise Merit Award programme, both of which are provided as financial support for students to attend the Bermuda College.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main functions of the Bermuda College Board of Governors is to deliver an annual report on the college activities and produce annual audited financial statements. I will first report on the Bermuda College Annual Report. The 2020–2021 Annual Report highlights the resilience demonstrated by faculty, staff and students alike in ensuring that business operations, instruction and learning proceeded with minimum disruption despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual report also shows the

progress made by the Bermuda College in key areas of its five-year strategic plan, Vision 2023: Delivering Success.

Mr. Speaker, some of the operational, academic and technical activities undertaken by Bermuda College during the past year are as follows:

- A virtual site visit of the college was held with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) accrediting agency. This culminated in NECHE accepting the first five-year interim report produced by Bermuda College.
- More than \$6 million was raised for capital projects and student financial assistance by the Bermuda College Foundation and its donors.
- The building commenced for a state-of-the-art Career Development Centre, renovation of one of its lecture theatres and upgrading of its IT infrastructure as a result of a generous gift of \$3.8 million from Athene, Athene Life Re, Athora [Life Re], Aspen Insurance Holdings and Catalina Holdings.
- There was an increased enrolment of 6 per cent in the academic divisions during a challenging period when comparable institutions grappled with enrolment. Additionally, PACE serviced 1,181 students compared to 857 the previous year, an increase of 37 per cent.
- During the past year, the college graduated 139 students, including 32 in January 2021 when it held its first winter commencement in over a decade. There were 15 graduates of the Mount Saint Vincent University programme, which represented the largest cohort in 10 years.
- In December 2020, a total of 296 students earned international qualifications and Workforce Development Certificates via the Division of Professional and Career Education (PACE); 109 public high school students earned their City and Guild Entry Level Introductory Award in Employability Skills, and 16 students earned the Certificate for Nursing Assistants [CNA].

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda College expanded its online programme offerings with signed articulation or transfer agreements with overseas institutions such as Southern New Hampshire University, offering a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology or General Studies, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration or Technical Management; East Carolina University in the area of Coastal and Marine Science; Walden University for Studies in Nursing from an RN to BSN programme; and Framingham State University, where the first cohort of 13 students commenced the Graduate Programme in Educational Leadership.

The college has also established partnerships with the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers (ABIR) and St. John's University in New York to develop a talent pipeline for Bermudians to enter the in-

surance/reinsurance industry. The Division of Professional and Career Education recorded its first qualified Associate Chartered Certified Accountant (ACCA) graduate since the inception of the programme. The PACE Division also achieved a commendable 25th ranking out of 200 community colleges in the Learning Resources Network, having registered over 90 students for online professional certificate courses during the year.

Mr. Speaker, student success undergirds all pedagogical strategies and initiatives in the college, and the following highlights are examples of student success: A partnership with Northampton University and the Bermuda Hospitals Board led to three nursing graduates from Northampton University's Bachelor's of Mental Health Programme, of which two received excellence awards. In Computer Information Systems, a second-year student took part in the Technology Leadership Forum, a government-sponsored internship involving multiple companies. Two students also took advantage of summer internships with @Company, a Silicon Valley tech start-up.

(Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Something just went wrong with my computer just now . . . Okay.)

Additionally, two Earth and Environmental Studies students participated in a six-week-long weekend programme for Marine Science scholars at the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences (BIOS). The aim of the programme was to reach students who could benefit from field and laboratory experience at BIOS. One student is now enrolled in the Marine Science Programme at Bermuda College; the other student will be attending the University of Plymouth in the fall to study Ocean Exploration and Surveying.

Mr. Speaker, I will now shift to the fiduciary responsibility of the Bermuda College Board of Governors. I am pleased to report that the 2021 audited financial statements for Bermuda College were unqualified. As such, in the opinion of the Auditor General, the statements present fairly the financial position of Bermuda College at the end of the fiscal year 2021. The audited financial statements indicate that the Bermuda College had assets worth \$22,692,466 and total liabilities of \$17,336,538.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that Bermuda College currently has no long-term debt. Cash and cash equivalents for the period increased by 27 per cent to \$3,807,943. The accounts receivable increased by 6.7 [per cent] to \$1,133,591, and the accounts payable decreased by 22 per cent and stood at \$2,892,951 at the end of the 2021 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, although there have been capital investments at the Bermuda College with the building of the Career Development Centre and upgrades to the IT infrastructure, this did not occur before March 31, 2021. As such, the capital assets reflected a depreciation as of March 31 and totalled \$14,909,119. However,

with the establishment of the Bermuda College Foundation, it is expected that there will be ongoing capital investments in the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the Government grant to the Bermuda College remained at \$15,906,000 during the 2020/21 fiscal period while other revenue decreased by \$577,704, or 2.6 per cent. However, total expenses also decreased by 9.2 per cent, resulting in excess revenue of \$1,016,304 [for the year].

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda College financial officers and the Office of the Auditor General have been working assiduously during the past year to ensure that Bermuda College complies with the financial standards of its accreditors, NECHE and the Bermuda College Act. This goal has been achieved since the college submitted both its 2020/21 audited financial statements and its 2020/21 Annual Report by September 30, 2021. As of today, both documents have been presented to this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I extend thanks to the Auditor General, Ms. Heather Thomas, and her team in the Office of the Auditor General, for their efforts in bringing Bermuda College up to date with its audits. Additionally, thanks are given to Mr. Dwight Furbert, Vice President of Finance & Operations, and his team at the Bermuda College.

Mr. Speaker, I will now report on the annual Government Tuition Grant of \$300,000 given to Bermuda College for financial support to students, and share information on the College Promise Merit Award programme.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak first to the annual grant of \$300,000. My honourable colleagues will recall that since September 2017 Bermuda College has been receiving an additional \$300,000 specifically to support students in financial need. The purpose of the grant is to provide financial assistance to students in one of the three academic divisions or the Professional and Career Education (PACE) Division of the College. To qualify for the funding, students must demonstrate a financial need and current students must also have a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher. The tuition awards range from 30 per cent to 100 per cent of the student's educational costs, with the educational costs defined as the value of tuition plus fees.

Mr. Speaker, this semester 78 students received financial assistance from the tuition grants totalling \$141,855. There were 25 students enrolled in the Mount Saint Vincent University Business of Administration degree programme; 23 were enrolled in business and finance programmes; 15 were enrolled in health programmes, and 15 in in-service programmes.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to point out that since this tuition grant was instituted in 2017, a total of 174 students have graduated or earned a certificate. Of that number, Mr. Speaker, 99 have graduated with an associate degree, diploma, or certificate from the academic divisions, 40 students earned a Workforce Development Certificate from PACE, 29 have earned their

bachelor's degree from Mount Saint Vincent University, 2 students earned a master's degree from Miami University, and 4 students have earned their post-graduate Teaching Diploma from the University of West Indies. Our students are experiencing success from this tuition grant, which we expect will trickle down into the economy as they pursue jobs in their respective fields of study.

Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, the College Promise Merit Award programme was introduced in 2019 specifically for high school students. This programme allows qualifying public school students to attend the Bermuda College tuition-free immediately after their high school graduation. This is the third year of the programme, and I am pleased to share with my honourable colleagues that since its inception in 2019, four students have graduated from Bermuda College. Currently, 65 students are participating in the College Promise programme at the Bermuda College this year, of whom 33 are new College Promise entrants and 32 are returning students.

Mr. Speaker, this Government remains committed to supporting our Bermudian students. They are taking the opportunity to pursue tertiary education and doing well in their pursuits. The Government will continue to provide funding to ensure that no student is denied a Bermuda College education due to a lack of finances.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to commend the board chair and members, faculty, staff and administration at the Bermuda College for their continued commitment to the operations and delivery of tertiary education at the Bermuda College during these unprecedented times. I invite this Honourable House to read the annual report for details of the Bermuda College's accomplishments and successes for the 2020/21 reporting period. Lastly, I encourage the general public to take advantage of the various courses and programmes offered at Bermuda College, where there are many paths—discover yours!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Minister, I believe there is a second Statement in your name.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker. But also, I would like to also point out that the Statement posted on the parliament website for the Bermuda College has some errors in it, and we did send an updated Statement a couple of days ago.

So, if we could get the correct one posted, I would really appreciate it.

The Speaker: No problem. We will have it adjusted on the SharePoint and put the amended version up.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you.

The Speaker: The next Statement is yours as well, and you can present that now.

COVID-19 UPDATE IN SCHOOLS

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I present a [COVID-19 update on our school](#) system.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in this Honourable House to provide an update on the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in our schools and the preventative measures that have been put in place in both our public and our private schools to keep our children safe.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that our Honourable Premier has shared with us repeatedly, and this morning I say it again, the coronavirus is with us and will continue to be with us for some time. We must accept and make adjustments for what has become our new normal. In our public and private schools, this has meant finding creative and engaging ways to ensure quality teaching and learning environments for students in the classroom, as this is where our children learn best.

Mr. Speaker, the beginning of the 2021/22 school year was not without its challenges. Bermuda was in its fourth and deadliest wave of community spread from the virus. Public school staff were being sent home in unsustainable numbers even before school buildings were fully open. Our private school partners did begin the school year with in-class learning. However, several schools were hit with positive cases, resulting in large numbers of students being placed in quarantine. One school had a delayed start, and another one completely closed for a week.

Mr. Speaker the increased number of COVID-19-positive cases caused the Ministry of Education to make the difficult decision to begin the 2021/22 academic year with remote learning for public schools. Despite the setbacks, there has been continued collaboration with the Ministry of Health to put the appropriate safety and health guidelines in place for our schools.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind my honourable colleagues that toward the end of the 2020/21 academic year, through collaboration between the Department of Education and the Molecular Diagnostic Lab (MDL), a saliva screening pilot programme was implemented in both public and private schools. The pilot programme saw staff from MDL visit the various schools to conduct saliva testing on consenting students and staff. Ultimately, students and staff consenting to participate in the programme were tested at least once per month.

The programme proved to be successful in identifying asymptomatic cases. Resultantly, the saliva screening programme was revised and has continued into the 2021/22 school year with all public schools testing weekly. At this point I want to extend my thanks to our parents and staff for supporting the programme and providing consent for their children to participate, as this will help to keep our schools safe.

Mr. Speaker, both public and private schools have implemented key COVID-19 preventative safety measures to ensure safety in school buildings. Public schools introduced a *pre-return* testing policy in that all staff and students were required to have a negative COVID-19 test to enter school buildings after a break in school. Private schools, on the other hand, have implemented the lateral flow testing for staff and students up to twice a week in most schools, which includes teaching staff, administrative staff, and janitorial and security staff.

Mr. Speaker, research has shown that in-person learning is best for our students. The focus of our schools has been to minimise continuous disruption of student learning due to identified positive COVID-19 cases in schools. The Ministry of Health has received input from the Ministry of Education, Department of Education and our private schools which has resulted in a revised approach to how close contacts and casual contacts are now treated in the event of a positive case having been identified in school.

Instead of having a full class of students having to quarantine, the Department of Health risk assessment now allows persons deemed as a casual contact to remain in school if an initial negative PCR test is obtained. However, close contacts are still required to quarantine as per usual. We are pleased about the change in policy which has allowed more students to remain in school for in-class learning.

Mr. Speaker, since schools have opened for the 2021/22 school year, there have been 38 positive COVID-19 cases to date—14 in public schools and 24 in the private schools. I am certain that the safety measures that have been put in place have helped to identify positive cases earlier and also have allowed schools to remain open with continuous in-person learning for our children.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Ministry of Health advised that schools could move from phase 1 to phase 2 of the School COVID-19 Guidelines, which means that our younger students from preschool to P3 do not have to wear face masks while inside the classroom. The intent is to review this policy in two weeks for a possible move to phase 3. Many in the community have advocated for a quicker move between the COVID-19 protocol school phases, as other entities in Bermuda have (quote-unquote) “opened up.”

However, Mr. Speaker, I do wish to remind all that our schools are considered high- to medium-risk locations. Students are in classrooms approximately three feet apart from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm daily. A relaxation in the school protocols too quickly, leading to an outbreak, could cause an entire class or year level to be quarantined. This would negate our recovery and our movement toward a new normal.

Mr. Speaker, each child sent home typically results in that household being quarantined. A household in quarantine can affect a parent’s ability to work and

other siblings’ ability to attend school. Those other siblings’ [situation] may result in fellow students at other schools being affected, and their respective households as well. If we stop and think about this, it is easy to see the potential knock-on effects of a positive case in a school. We want to, and we will, ease the restrictions, but this will be done with the need to balance the safety of our children and the need for them to remain in school.

Mr. Speaker, in this last outbreak, approximately one-third of cases were children. And to my understanding, a few cases can be traced back to parents’ sending their children to childcare settings where other children were infected and then returned home to infect household members. While children may not be as affected by COVID-19 as adults, children tend to be around their elders, who may be more susceptible to COVID-19 complications. With our prevalence of multi-generational households, this could be a real issue. The guidelines in schools have allowed us to have schools open and keep them open, but at the same time protect our community.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do what is best for our students and their families to keep them in school and learning. While this may be an inconvenience to our adults at times, our focus will remain on keeping our schools safe for in-person learning.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this time to thank the staff at the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Department of Health School Surveillance Team, our private school partners, and the Schools Testing Team at the Bermuda Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory. It is genuinely the collaborative effort of all involved and their hard work and dedication to ensure that our schools have programmes that have enabled us to keep our students in school and be protected as much as possible from the COVID-19 virus.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement now?

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this time last year I provided this House with an [update on COVID-19 public health](#) guidance. At that time, we had about 270 confirmed positive cases and one or two people in hospital. That was the beginning of our second wave. As I speak to you today, with our fourth wave dwindling, we have had 5,730 confirmed cases of COVID-19, more than 300 hospitalisations and, sadly, 106 COVID-19-related deaths in the community. While

the fourth wave exacted a toll on us all, we in the Ministry of Health are convinced it would have been worse if not for the level of vaccination in the community. Vaccines do work. Our Island data prove this.

Mr. Speaker, the next step for all of us in Bermuda is to learn how to live with COVID-19. The pandemic is not over, so we must continue to follow public health guidelines to keep ourselves, our families and our friends safe. As I have stated in this House before—and this is well worth repeating—success in dealing with COVID-19 requires a community effort. It is a community effort because this is one of the few situations where an individual's decision to adhere to public health measures *or not* impacts all of us. In this pandemic, individual choices can, and do, have Island-wide consequences.

In keeping with the decrease in levels of community transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, the Government is making the following changes to the Public Health (COVID-19 Emergency Powers) (Phased Re-opening) Regulations 2021:

- The size of large groups will now increase from 30 to 50, and this includes weddings and funerals as well as island boats, in respect of the use of SafeKey.
- In restaurants, members clubs and bars, tables no longer need to be spaced six feet apart; however, for the time being these establishments will still be restricted to seated service only.
- With respect to recreational boating, raft-ups are permitted once again.
- Students enrolled in a school testing programme will be able to use a *Student 7-day Pass* (issued after a negative test result) to enable them to dine indoors with parents or guardians who have SafeKey. And this also will apply to their ability to attend youth sporting and recreational activities that also require a SafeKey.

Mr. Speaker, having a school student testing programme in Bermuda's public and private schools has provided a great opportunity for flexibility when it comes to dining. It applies to students who are 11 years of age and under. For young children who are four years of age and under, they will be able to dine indoors at a restaurant as long as their parent or guardian has a SafeKey.

We will be working with the schools to implement the Student 7-day Pass as early as next week. Additional public health guidance will be amended to state that remote working is no longer strongly recommended. Offices can be opened with proper public health measures in place. Also, movie theatres, galleries and museums are to be allowed [to be open], providing [there is] physical distancing of three feet with masks being worn at all times indoors. The legislative and guidance changes will take effect, Mr. Speaker, from Monday, the 29th of November.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot overemphasise the importance of continuing with good public health measures: Wear your mask, wash your hands and maintain a physical distance of six feet from others in crowded indoor and outdoor settings, and particularly if you do not know the vaccination status of the people you are with. Again, to repeat myself: This is not the same as choosing not to wear a helmet or choosing not to use your seatbelt, where the person you are most likely to harm is yourself. Failure to follow public health measures has a far more significant impact, as the virus spreads quickly throughout our Island home, affecting families, schools, businesses and more.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to assessing and making changes to the Emergency Powers Regulations, the Government is reviewing the Island's travel protocols as well. Taking into consideration vaccination levels within countries where the majority of our travellers are coming from, and vaccination levels here in Bermuda, we are looking at amending our requirements to ensure we are competitive. We will be changing the pre-arrival test requirement to accept antigen tests, which are less expensive and easier for travellers to Bermuda to acquire, as well as PCR tests.

We are also reviewing the follow-up testing once on Island. The changes are aimed at allowing vaccinated visitors to begin enjoying Bermuda quickly without an extended period of quarantine upon arrival. Finally, Mr. Speaker, we are making adjustments to enable residents who travel abroad for less than 72 hours to use their pre-departure test obtained in Bermuda as their pre-arrival test upon their return. This will facilitate quick trips overseas. These changes will require amendments to the Quarantine (COVID19) (No. 3) Order 2020, and will be finalised shortly.

Mr. Speaker, visitors to the Island support our hotels, our restaurants, our bars and our taxis. They participate in a variety of experiences and visit the diverse attractions the Island has to offer. They rent minicars and mopeds, and in general provide an invaluable boost to our local economy. In short, visitors support jobs. As we put in place protocols and policies which will support our economic recovery, it is only natural to consider our border controls and traveller testing regime.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has learned a lot about this particular virus and how to cope in a pandemic over the past almost two years. The learning curve was steep, and the impacts of COVID-19 on the Island and the world were unprecedented in our lifetime. As Christmas gets closer, I would like to take this opportunity to provide public health advice on how to manage as we live with COVID-19. And learn to live with it we must. The Government has worked to strike a balance between risk mitigation and the economic impact of taking precautions. With 70 per cent of the total population fully vaccinated, and 79 per cent of the eligible population vaccinated, the emphasis shifts to economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, you will be aware that one of the most important steps an individual can take to *stop the spread* is to simply wear a mask. That remains! And it applies whether or not you are vaccinated. Masks should be worn by the following people:

- workers at all workplace premises;
- people using public transportation or taxis;
- any person visiting any indoor establishment such as a grocery store, a shop, a bank, an office, et cetera, unless otherwise allowed by specific guidance such as that which would apply in bars, restaurants and gyms; and
- in crowded outdoor settings when other persons are present and a distance of six feet cannot be maintained.

Also, Mr. Speaker, as we attend Christmas parties in the coming weeks, please be aware that social mixing is identified through contact tracing investigations as a primary means by which COVID-19 transmission occurs. Social mixing can lead to a less robust adherence to public health protocols, so I strongly encourage everyone to be careful and responsible.

Mr. Speaker, above all, vaccination is key to living with COVID-19. It reduces the severity of COVID-19 if you get infected, and it reduces hospitalisations as well as deaths. As reported yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the booster vaccine is now available to anyone 18 years of age or older who has had their second COVID vaccination dose a minimum of six months ago. You can book an appointment on gov.bm by selecting Book a Booster Vaccine Appointment. Alternatively, individuals can call the Vaccination Hotline at 444-2498 (selecting option 2) or email vaccine@gov.bm. For those who are 65 and older, they can walk into the Pier 6 vaccination centre Monday to Friday to get their booster.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to say this Government is very aware of just how difficult it is to effect an economic recovery while still in the midst of a global pandemic. At this stage it is critically important for personal responsibility to come to the forefront. Wear a mask; practice good hand hygiene; keep physically distanced from others, particularly in indoor settings and crowded outdoor settings; download the WeHealth app; and avoid the three Cs of crowded places, closed spaces and close-contact settings.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard and worked together to reach this point in the pandemic. Our continued commitment to robust public health protocols is critical, and I want to thank the entire Bermuda community for all of their efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning is by the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

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

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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

Mr. Speaker, the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) is observed on the 3rd of December and has been promoted by the United Nations since 1992. The observance of the day aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at all levels of society and development. Also, it provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the achievements and challenges persons with disabilities face within every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life in our community.

Mr. Speaker, the UN estimates that approximately 15 per cent of the world's population, which equates to one billion people, are living with some form of disability. Disability is defined by the UN as *a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual of their group*. It is often used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness and various types of chronic disease.

Mr. Speaker, under the Human Rights Act 1981, "disability" is defined as "the condition of being a disabled person." The said Act defines "disabled person" to include physical disability; physical reliance, for example on a guide dog; or [the person] previously has had a mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effects on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Mr. Speaker, this year's theme is *Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world*. With this theme in mind, the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors strives to make the promises made by the Government which impact persons with disabilities a reality.

Mr. Speaker, the UN highlights the fact that evidence and experience show that when barriers to inclusion are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life, the entire community benefits. Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are therefore a detriment to society as a whole, and inclusion and accessibility are necessary to achieve progress and development for all.

Mr. Speaker, currently the Ministry is in the process of working with the UK to have the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities extended to Bermuda to ensure Bermuda is an inclusive society that recognises and respects persons with disabilities for their ability and not their disability. A formal register of persons with disabilities is being developed. The register aims to assist with data collection to provide projections for support, services and benefits, which will ultimately assist in improving quality of life. Also the register will ensure there is clarity of the current and future needs of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, no person in our society should be left behind or feel ostracised because they have a disability. The Government encourages dialogue on all forms of disabilities. This provides a platform to educate all sectors of our community to ensure persons with disabilities are given the dignity they deserve. I believe that more awareness of persons with disabilities ultimately will lead to more understanding and acceptance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight some events that will be taking place in the community on Friday, December 3, in recognition of the International Day of People with Disabilities:

Ageing and Disability Services will be *Taking it to the Streets* with the assistance of Media Maya to engage persons in the City of Hamilton (throughout the community) to start the conversation and bring awareness of persons with disabilities. Also, this provides an opportunity to determine if people in our community can identify unseen/invisible disabilities—for example, autism.

The Intellectual Disabilities team at the Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute [MAWI] will be having their second motorcade. It is intended that the motorcade will start at 11:00 am from the Mid Atlantic Wellness Institute. More information will be provided through the media. Residents of Bermuda, I encourage you to show your support by standing along the motorcade route.

WindReach [registered charity 92] is hosting a one-day free virtual conference on Zoom from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm entitled Common Ground 2021. The theme of the conference is encouraging advocacy to ensure persons with disabilities are given their right to be heard on issues impacting their lives and across the community. The event will be facilitated and moderated by occupational therapist Alyssa Frick and Paralympian Jessica Lewis.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, December 4, Special Olympics Bermuda [registered charity 978] will be having their first Polar Plunge at Horseshoe Bay, starting at 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The Polar Plunge is a fundraising event for the Special Olympics globally. This event has shown increased popularity in other jurisdictions such as the US and Canada. Mr. Speaker, I encourage people to show support by attending at least one of the events I have mentioned.

In closing, I quote the British neurologist Oliver Sacks: “I wish for a world” (in this case Bermuda) “that views disability, mental or physical, not as a hindrance but as unique attributes that can be seen as powerful assets if given the right opportunities.” Let us come together as a community and provide opportunities for persons with disabilities so that we can create a better Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Minister.

LABOUR ADVISORY COUNCIL ITS ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

Hon. Jason Hayward: I am pleased to rise today to provide to the Members of this Honourable House an overview of the role and functions of the [Labour Advisory Council](#) [the LAC] and the work that it will commence in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, the LAC was established in the 1960s in response to the labour and social unrest that was taking place during that time. It is a non-statutory tripartite government board tasked with advancing industrial relations and garnering consensus amongst its members to make recommendations concerning legislative amendments, policies and standards regarding Bermuda's labour force.

The LAC is chaired by the Minister of Labour and comprises representatives from government, employer groups and worker groups as equal and independent partners, together seeking solutions to the issues facing Bermuda's labour force through social dialogue. This form of social dialogue is referred to as *tripartism*, and it is extremely effective as it allows for the views of each side to be taken into consideration when decisions are made, leading to more favourable outcomes for all stakeholders involved.

Mr. Speaker, the LAC meets quarterly and has the ability to meet more frequently where necessary. Subcommittees of the LAC meet more regularly. The LAC will reconvene quarterly meetings in January 2022 and has a robust agenda that I will now share with the Members of this Honourable House. The agenda includes, but is not limited to

1. further amendments to the Employment Act 2000;
2. guidance on independent contractor contracts; and
3. inequalities in the world of work.

Further Amendments to the Employment Act

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has identified areas within the Employment Act 2000 where further strengthening of workplace protection is required. The LAC will be asked to review and opine on a policy document in this regard, which includes but is not limited to the following areas:

1. A requirement to notify the Ministry of Labour where an employer intends to engage in mass terminations of more than 20 persons. This will enable the Ministry to provide the necessary assistance in a timely manner to employers as it relates to compliance with

the Act, as well as to employees as it relates to seeking alternate employment and/or retooling them for the labour force.

2. Determining what constitutes the end of a layoff period. This will ensure that when recalling employees to work, there are measures in place that protect employees from consecutive layoff periods and clearly defining the end of the layoff period.

3. The publication of employment standards. This will ensure that all employed persons, particularly work permit holders, are aware of their rights and obligations under the Act and whom they may contact for assistance.

4. Workplace inspections by the Labour Relations Manager. This will ensure that employers maintain adequate employment records in accordance with the Act and that employees have the appropriate access.

5. Wage theft protections. This will strengthen employee protections ensuring that there are adequate provisions to protect employees from employers who

- a. fail to pay employees for all hours worked;
- b. fail to make appropriate overtime payments;
- c. fail to allocate tips to employees; and
- d. illegally deduct or fail to make the appropriate statutory benefit payments.

Provide Guidance on Independent Contractor Contracts

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has received a number of concerns from workers and members of the public pertaining to unfair contractual terms and employment contracts that seem to take advantage of the current economic climate in Bermuda and persons' inability to find suitable and sustainable employment.

The Act was amended to address this long-standing issue and allows for the Manager of the Labour Relations Section, in consultation with the Labour Advisory Council, to issue guidance for the purpose of determining whether an employment relationship more closely resembles that of an employee than an independent contractor.

The LAC will consider this issue and determine whether it is necessary to issue guidance in this regard and the contents of the same.

Inequalities in the World of Work

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, on the 23rd of November 2021, I attended the International Labour Organization Caribbean Labour Ministers Meeting in preparation for the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference. The LAC will review and consider the report submitted to the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference, entitled "Inequalities and the World of Work." The LAC will consider this report

as it relates to Bermuda and will seek to address the following areas:

- the economic and social implications of inequality in the workplace;
- the main drivers of inequality inside of the labour market; and
- what effective responsive policies and measures should be introduced to reduce inequality and promote productivity and growth, including in the context of the recovery from the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of this Honourable House for the opportunity to address them in this regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

GANG VIOLENCE

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide an update on the work of the Ministry of National Security in addressing gang violence. Specifically, I will address some of the root causes, our existing [gang violence](#) reduction programmes, proposed programmes and our multi-ministry approach.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why individuals join a gang. Unfortunately, it is a lifestyle that is glamorised in television, movies and music. A gang provides identity, respect, security, a sense of belonging and support that [gang members] may not be getting at home or from the community. The reality is that for some it provides a more attractive lifestyle than being a law-abiding productive member of society. Gangs offer social support systems and the opportunity for financial gains that our young people are struggling to find through traditional home and work pathways.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that many of our young people are the victims of generations of economic inequality in Bermuda. The breakdown of the family unit, poor education and [lack of] employment opportunities make it very difficult to break the cycle and enable social mobility.

Mr. Speaker, we will not police our way out of this problem. We must assist those who are in gangs with a way out and tackle the root causes. We must provide opportunities to the next generation that makes being a productive and law-abiding member of society a better alternative than joining a gang.

Mr. Speaker, through our actions and in some cases our lack of action, as a community we have created a gap that gangs are filling for our young people. The National Security Ministry's Gang Violence Reduction Team [GVRT] offers several programmes that attempt to address this gap. Most recently, the Redemption Farm programme has provided 15 men with a 30-week work placement. To date, 10 out of the 15 trainees have transitioned into full-time or part-time employment or into educational pursuits.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team administers programmes within every level of our public school system that provide pro-social networks for students at medium to high risk for antisocial behaviour. Over the course of the summer the Gang Violence Reduction Team partnered with local companies to provide mentorships and internships to students involved in these programmes. The primary objective is to encourage a transition away from antisocial behaviour into a life of meaningful work.

Mr. Speaker, our goals are to

- change the pattern of behaviour of individuals involved in group and gang violence, and reintegrate them back into mainstream society;
- prevent preteens and adolescents from joining gangs and engaging in antisocial behaviour by re-establishing positive social bonds;
- create opportunities of employment for young people and individuals who have previously not been employable due to antisocial backgrounds;
- connect at-risk youth, men and women with the necessary helping agencies that will aid in addressing mental and social health issues; and
- place more focus on fostering and sustaining positive interpersonal relationships.

Mr. Speaker, the Gang Violence Reduction Team clients carry life histories marked by poverty, violence, marginalisation and intergenerational abuse and neglect. Many have incarceration experiences or have pending charges and cases. The young men we support face additional challenges presented by institutionalisation, discrimination, community judgment, major educational gaps, negligible work history, and criminal records/criminal proceedings which can preclude employment. For many of our clients, [illegal] substances are a way of coping with the pain of gang involvement, homelessness, and mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, to meet our goals we are taking a multi-agency approach that includes the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Development and Seniors, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Legal Affairs as well as the Ministry of Public Works. We will also be partnering with third sector agencies and employers to provide additional services and opportunities for our at-risk youth, including the following:

- counselling services;

- individual programmes of social support and care;
- education assistance;
- mentorship;
- pathways to further education;
- opportunities for social mobility;
- career guidance;
- family counselling and support;
- financial assistance; and
- employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, there is no one-size-fits-all, and each at-risk youth will be assessed to match the right services and programmes to meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, we must work to rebuild the sense of community that has eroded in recent years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Acting Minister for Works and Engineering.

Minister Furbert, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Members and Bermuda.

The Speaker: Good morning.

TYNES BAY WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide the House with an update on the present critical status of the Tynes Bay facility.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago on November 10 in a press conference I spoke of the critical state of [Tynes Bay](#) and our need to invest heavily for it not to fail. This morning I will give an update of the ongoing battle the engineers and technicians at Tynes Bay are waging to get the plant back up and running, and the serious challenges we are all facing in terms of the Island's ability to dispose of its waste.

Mr. Speaker, the Tynes Bay facility is our only means of municipal solid waste disposal, and should the facility fail, it will mean the country's reverting to landfilling. Mr. Speaker, sadly I must report that we may very soon be at that point. For the last two weeks, since my initial report, a crew of specialist boilermakers from Europe have been working nonstop to make repairs to both boiler units at the plant. At the same time, our contingency system, which normally bales refuse during these times of outages, also suffered a critical failure. In addition, the COVID-19 and supply chain issues in Europe have exacerbated the repair of the baler to the point where our own employees had to skilfully fabricate replacement parts, using 3D printing technology, to rebuild a hydraulic ram. But sadly, even these efforts to get the system up and running have failed.

Mr. Speaker, while we do have a replacement ram being air-freighted, the timing for its arrival and the space left in the bunker to stockpile the refuse that is collected daily are simply at odds. In order to preserve what little space we have left, bulky waste material is already being diverted for shredding at the Marsh Folly location for later disposal at Tynes Bay. But even this will not buy us the amount of time we need. Mr. Speaker, with the tentative timeframe to have both boilers back in operation still being two weeks ahead, we will simply not have room to store any more garbage. As such, the Ministry is now preparing for its last resort for waste disposal, and that is reopening a portion of Marsh Folly for landfilling.

We had hoped to avoid this outcome and have done so for the last 10 years. But at this point the options are few. We anticipate needing to landfill for a period of perhaps one to two weeks while the boiler repairs are completed and the baling system is repaired. Once these alternatives are available, the landfilling will stop.

While time is not on our side, we as a government are committed to doing something about it. I reported two weeks ago that we are looking to invest some \$7.5 million into the plant to get it to a point of stabilisation. Since that time, engineers have now received the actual pricing from specialised waste-to-energy contractor, I.C.E. AG, out of Switzerland for the full scope of works necessary to get the boilers through the next three to four years. While our original in-house estimates were close, the true pricing is closer to \$8.5 million. That cost may still rise, as much of it is based on the cost of steel and other materials, which are changing rapidly due to the global supply-chain crisis.

Mr. Speaker, with the cost of baling and other associated works such as quality assurance for insurance purposes, crane hire and other on-island logistics added to this figure, the final total for the project may be closer to \$9 [million] to \$10 million and will take about 11 weeks for each boiler to be repaired. While this may seem like a lot of money, for comparison, the cost of full replacement, which is what we really need at this point, is closer to \$150 million.

And to be clear, the \$10 million we are planning to spend now only addresses the boilers, which are at the heart of the plant and the most vulnerable at this time. But there are still many critical auxiliary systems at Tynes Bay that are past obsolescence that can just as easily shut down the plant if they are not soon replaced. So with life restored to the boilers, time will be of the essence to pursue the full solution of the \$150 million investment. I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Public Works in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance have met and are meeting urgently to find creative financing solutions for such a large sum in our present financial state.

Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, with the effects of the pandemic on [the] supply chain and even getting people mobilised, these costs cannot be cast in stone,

and we are constantly balancing the risk of getting support here as quickly as possible while also providing COVID-19 safety. With the support of our specialist contractor we are aiming to execute the works in February of next year, leaving little time to even prepare. But the contractors and the Ministry are committed to getting the work done as soon as possible. I will endeavour to continue to give updates on this critical work as it transpires.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the final Statement this morning is that of the Minister of Transport.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL—DESIGNATED DRIVER CAMPAIGN

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport acknowledges the sobering fact that 16 lives have been lost to road traffic accidents in 2021. I extend my condolences to the families and friends who are grieving the untimely loss of a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, with only a few weeks to go until Christmas, parties will be taking place, which is why the Bermuda [Road Safety Council's](#) [RSC] slogan for December is *Designate YOUR Driver!* Mr. Speaker, a designated driver is crucial for everyone to enjoy a safe holiday season. Designated drivers are an integral part of keeping roads safe, and by educating friends and family we can work together to lower the number of accidents and deaths.

Mr. Speaker, an alarming trend observed by the Road Safety Council is persons choosing *the person who seems least intoxicated* of the group to get behind the wheel after a night of drinking, instead of a completely sober driver. That is why it is crucial to designate a driver *before* any drinking takes place.

Mr. Speaker, with the holiday season approaching, there will be an increase in events and parties where alcohol will be consumed. The Bermuda Road Safety Council encourages all event planners, organisers and hosts of large events to incorporate a Transportation Plan. For assistance with implementing a Transportation Plan for your event, organisers should in advance of the event email bdarsc@gmail.com. And I will repeat that: bdarsc@gmail.com. Or contact the Road Traffic Officer at 707-2349.

Mr. Speaker, we want everyone to have a safe holiday. If you cannot secure a designated driver, remember that there are always ways to get home safe without getting behind the wheel such as hiring a taxi

or minibus, using HITCH or Home Safe, or calling a family member or friend to come and pick you up. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge CADA for hosting their annual Let Us Drive initiative, which will take place on December 9, 11, 16, 17 and 18, details of which will be announced in the media in days to come.

Mr. Speaker, in December the Bermuda Road Safety Council, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, will launch the second annual P6 Road Safety Essay Competition on the topic, *What dangers can you encounter when walking and riding your pedal bikes on the road, and what can you do to stay safe?* Additionally, the first annual M1 Road Safety Essay Competition is on the topic, *Why do we have speed limits and why are they so important?*

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, the Road Safety Council and the Road Traffic Officer will continue to work with partner agencies in the Bermuda Police Service and the Ministry of National Security to educate the public [on] dangerous driving on Bermuda's roads. The Road Safety Council will continue with its monthly public education and awareness campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise the impact that road sobriety checkpoints have had on road safety, and the Ministry of Transport will be working with the Bermuda Police Service and the Road Safety Council to reintroduce it for the holiday season. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry believes that if we start the conversation on road safety with our children and everyone we love [who uses] Bermuda roads, we can make better road safety decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

We now move on to other items on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Next is the question-and-answer period for this morning. And this morning we do have written questions. So, we will do the written questions before we go into the questions from this morning's Statements.

The first written question this morning is from the Opposition Leader to the Minister of Finance. They have indicated that they requested an oral response.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Minister, did you want to get my attention?

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

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 18(4), with the leave of the House I wish to defer the answers to these questions to the next day of sitting. I have spoken with the Opposition Leader, and he has agreed with that request.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you. That was going to be my next question, that the two sides have worked it out. If you are both in agreement, the House will abide by that.

So, Members, you heard that. The written questions will be deferred until the next sitting for the Minister of Finance.

QUESTIONS: COST OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS WITH KPMG, PWC, DELOITTE LIMITED AND EY BERMUDA 2020-2021

[Deferred]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House, the total amount paid by the Government individually to KPMG, PWC, Deloitte Limited and EY Bermuda for the period commencing April 1, 2020 ending October 31, 2021?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House both the purpose and terms of engagement for each service agreement by company and by the engaging Ministry?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please summarise for this Honourable House the details of the completed engagements by company and ministry for the said period, along with the engagements yet to be completed by company and ministry?

The Speaker: The second [set of] written questions this morning is from MP Dunkley to the Minister of Health. Again, there are three questions, and each has an indication for an oral response.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your questions?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: The first question to the Honourable Minister—

The Speaker: And I should say that we have 60 minutes, starting now.

QUESTION 1: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION APPLICATIONS—TOTAL REVENUE PAID TO GOVERNMENT 2020–2021

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The first question to the Honourable Minister: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the total revenue paid to Government as a result of the travel authorisation applications (TAA) submitted each month from November 1, 2020, through October 31, 2021?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the total revenue paid to the Government as a result of the travel authorisations for the period November 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, is already in the public domain. The period July 1, 2021, to October 31, 2021, is as follows:

- July 21—\$1,514,799.69
- August 21—\$1,637,760.70
- September 21—\$1,312,756.35
- October 21—\$1,466,423.70
- Total of the four months—\$5,931,740.44

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No. Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION APPLICATIONS—TOTAL FUNDS PAID OUT 2020–2021

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide the House the total funds paid out to resQwest, or any other entity or individual, due to contracts or expenses associated with the TAA for each month from November 1, 2020, through to October 31, 2021?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the total funds paid to resQwest or any other entity or individual due to contract expenses associated with this travel authorisation each month for the period November 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, are already in the public domain.

The periods July 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021: are as follows:

- July 21, Invoice 1833—\$95,876
- August 21, Invoice 1904—\$111,462
- September 21, Invoice 2017—\$89,320
- October 21, Invoice 2024—\$120,093
- Total—\$460,751

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Put your third question.

QUESTION 3: TRAVEL AUTHORISATION APPLICATIONS—EXPIRATION AND TERMS OF RESQWEST CONTRACT

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House the date on which the contract with resQwest expires and what are the terms of the current contract?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the contract with resQwest expired on the 31st of March 2021 with a month-to-month termination clause, which went into effect on the 1st of April 2021. Contract terms of reference continue under the month-to-month extension. With respect to the travel authorisation contract and the terms and conditions, that matter is in the public domain. The following is with respect to the terms and conditions of the lab portal contract:

Development scope, phase 1. The scope of phase 1 is to create a system to enable the Bermuda Government and Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory to begin COVID-19 testing and to have the ability to run reports to provide results to their stakeholders. This will include the following functionality:

1.1 Create and control interval testing times at one location and [at] the Bermuda Government Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory.

1.2 Each location will be named and can be tracked to each appointment.

1.3 Set up multiple secure logins for administration.

1.4 Set up multiple website pages pointing to each location.

1.5 Set up appointment webpage for access by essential work class.

1.6 Set up appointment webpage for general public.

1.7 Provide unique appointment-booking ID.

1.8 Provide unique custom fields for data collection.

1.9 Set up appointment manifests.

1.10 Allow for updating appointment ID with test results.

1.11 Set up data reports to download to Excel.

1.12 Training and administration of staff.

1.13 Provide additional administrative support as required, subject to additional fee as set out in Appendix 2.

Section 2, Development Scope, phase 2. The scope of phase 2 is to enhance the system to provide additional functionality, which includes the following:

2.1 Ability to edit appointment times and locations.

- 2.2 Create inventory for additional locations.
- 2.3 Mass edit of appointment times and locations.
- 2.4 Timestamp tracking of edits and changes.
- 2.5 Set up unique patient identifier to allow for retesting and tracking of appointments.
- 2.6 Provide additional data text fields.
- 2.7 Set up doctor, administration, personnel with logins and edit screens to review and update patient data and results.
- 2.8 Set up doctor, administration, personnel with access to add a new patient file.
- 2.9 Set up doctor, administration, personnel with ability to change time and location for testing.
- 2.10 You can download patient-to-patient when results are updated or changed.
- 2.11 Create webpage email for patient to review the information and results.
- 2.12 Update report, status change report and cancellation report.
- 2.13 Training of additional administration staff.
- 2.14 Provide additional administrative support as required subject to additional fee as set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.15 Set up server in conjunction with the Government to separate the Government data from all other data on the resQwest portal.

Item 3, Development Scope, phase 3. Scope of phase 3 is to enhance the system to provide additional functionality, which includes the following:

3.1 Create the ability to generate a permanent client record for organisations such as long-term care residential homes, the Department of National Security, et cetera, in a system such that (a) lab tests can be booked against the permanent client record; and (b) all test results can be viewed within the client record.

Item 4, System Description.

4.1 The supplier will be using resQwest, their proprietary software, at the server to deliver a customised solution to the COVID-19 lab testing system.

4.2 The software database hosted by Microsoft Resource Service is under the direct control of the supplier.

4.3 The system is accessed via Chrome Internet browser.

4.4 The system is accessed via a superior user login.

Section 5, System Availability.

5.1 System access will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except during any downtime due to system maintenance and the circumstances which are not within the supplier's control.

5.2 Supplier will need to make every reasonable effort to conduct any such system maintenance outside of the normal business hours, weekdays 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Atlantic Standard Time, and to advise client prior to any scheduled maintenance.

Section 6, Maintenance and Operational Support.

6.1 Included in the administration fee as outlined in Appendix 2.

6.2 Use and maintenance of the software including hosting and maintaining servers.

6.3 Ongoing licence fees of database and software.

6.4 Updates in patches to servers and database.

6.5 Monitoring of all software, servers and database performance.

6.6 Dynamic synching of data between servers.

6.7 Redundancy backup on a 24/7 basis, power supply and data file backup.

6.8 Server rental management and update.

6.9 Up to 2 GB monthly data traffic, use applicable excess traffic.

6.10 Daily review of traffic and system performance.

6.11 Minor modifications as required by resQwest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister did mention in reply to the question that we are on a month-to-month contract now since the end of March 2021. Is the Minister able to inform the Honourable House how long this month-to-month contract will continue?

The Speaker: Minister.

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

We are negotiating new terms and conditions. So, it is hopeful that this will be resolved in due course.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I note that [this] is what the Minister said last time around. So, I look forward to hearing—

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Can the Minister confirm that from the original contract, when it went to month-to-month, that there are no changes in that contract?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That is correct.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. That brings us to a close of the written questions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Oh, a supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Opposition Leader, you want to put a supplementary. Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

Can the Minister confirm whether or not we will be able to bring that service that resQwest is providing in-house, in government, so that we will not have to out-source, given that we have a rather relaxed month-to-month agreement?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I am unable to answer that. I do believe that part of the process has been facilitated heretofore. Mr. Speaker, resQwest is quite extensive. Insofar as whether or not Government will be looking to bring that in-house, those are discussions that we can have. But I cannot answer that any further than that. And I would certainly disagree with the Honourable Member with respect to a “relaxed” contract. This is the contract that, the month-to-month continues on the same terms and conditions as when we first engaged resQwest.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Leader, do you note the response?
Any further supplementary from anyone?

There are none. Members, we will now move on to the questions that have been indicated in reference to the Statements that were made this morning. And the first question is in response to the Premier's Statement on the Joint Ministerial Council.

Premier, you have a question from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: JOINT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL 2021

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

In the Statement, the Premier said, “I met with William Macfarlane, Director, Economics and Trade at the UK Mission to the EU” And they were, in essence, looking at how to deepen their connections. And he said, “This included in the important areas of vaccination certificate equivalence and EU mobility, climate change and follow-up from COP26, and financial services.”

I accept those comments. My question to the Premier is, What are the next action points for Bermuda? And what are the next action points for the UK Mission to the EU in regard to these connections and these initiatives that he showcased in this paragraph?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier, would you like to respond?

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

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Opposition Leader will know that Bermuda is not a sovereign country. And therefore, our office in Brussels is not fully accredited for international representation and was only allowed to be set up with the permission of the United Kingdom Government.

We were actually due on that day to meet with the ambassador, the Permanent Ambassador to the European Union from the United Kingdom, and that meeting was confirmed. However, due to the challenges that the United Kingdom is currently having in its negotiations with the European Union over the Northern Ireland protocol, the ambassador was called away to join a Cabinet Minister who was currently meeting with the commission on those matters.

In regard to the follow-up on those particular issues, the Bermuda representative in Brussels, Ms. Aliyyah Ahad, works closely with persons in the UK Mission on a number of instances, as that is the only way that there can be official representation on official issues.

So, the meeting that we took with William Macfarlane was speaking on these issues. And one of things that certainly we are working on is the issue of vaccination certificate equivalence, because there certainly is the—we are part of the UK vaccination programme, and it is a tie-in matter to make sure that persons who are travelling to Europe from Bermuda, [with their] vaccination certificate, can actually go ahead and be passported into the European Union's vaccine and pass programme, which is required for entry into a number of various establishments.

In regard to further matters of engagement, I am happy, if the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would like to write to me, I can have the Brussels office provide him a full outreach of all of their items. Or I am

happy to set up a meeting with the Honourable Opposition Leader if he would like to understand what Ms. Aliyyah Ahad is doing in the Brussels office, as she is a very bright, talented star and [is] stellar, and is doing great work on behalf of the Government in Brussels.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

QUESTION 2: JOINT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL 2021

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would take the Premier up on his offer. And Ms. Ahad, I know she is a very competent and very bright young lady, so I do not question her capabilities or how she is performing her responsibilities.

On the last page, the Minister spoke about—“Mr. Speaker, this was an opportunity to discuss Bermuda’s broader interests vis-à-vis the European Union, ranging from financial services and Solvency II to innovations within Bermuda’s digital assets and renewable energy sectors. This meeting helped identify potential synergies with CEPS and areas for future cooperation.”

Can the Premier provide more details on this Statement, just for clarity? Like what synergies? And just provide more meat on this statement. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, this meeting was at the advice of our Brussels representative. And the meeting was to discuss with the Centre for European Policy Studies and its CEO about what further engagement can happen between the Government of Bermuda, as we are now official members of this particular think tank. The discussions were in regard to our future engagement that will happen from Ministers of the Government in Brussels—what events that we can jointly post, speaking engagements so that the Minister of Finance, who will be travelling to Brussels regularly on matters of economic diplomacy and engagement with Members of the European Commission on Tax and other matters to make sure that we can find ways to broaden the knowledge of what Bermuda does inside of Brussels and thought-leaders inside of Brussels.

What this was is about further engagement. We have not been able to be on the ground in Brussels as a government or have any official government representative since November of 2019. And so we are, I do not want to say *starting from scratch*, but we are continuing to make sure that we raise our profile and differentiate where Bermuda stands.

So, it is important that we continue to spread the message. As it was stated in the Statement, this think tank is a very influential think tank in Brussels. It has a lot of thought-leaders. And what we want to make sure to do is that when we are spending our money and

making sure that we are doing outreach, that we are doing an outreach to the persons who can actually impact decisions and impact thought inside of Brussels. Bermuda is different.

There was one meeting that was held with a particular member of the European . . . not of the European Commission, the Director General of FISMA [Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union]. And one of the things of which was said in that meeting, which was attended by the Minister of Finance, was the fact that Bermuda is held up as an example, by the European Union of small island states who are excelling at compliance.

The challenge is that inside of the sphere of Europe, that is not always known, and we are often lumped in with other jurisdictions. So, our challenge is to make sure that we can differentiate ourselves. And the Brussels representative has mapped out a strategy for engagement, and this is one of the strategies for engagement.

So, we want to meet with the CEO, take the opportunity to meet with the CEO. And Ms. Ahad is going to follow up on further matters so that when the Minister of Finance travels next year and I myself travel at the annual JMC, around the annual JMC we can have a series of engagements which are set up at a higher level so we can impact the thought leadership and clearly differentiate Bermuda from other jurisdictions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you.
I have no further questions.

The Speaker: None? Okay. Thank you.

Premier, there are no further questions to your Statement.

Members, the next Statement that Members have questions for is the Deputy Premier’s Statement this morning, on his recent trip.

Deputy Premier, you have a question from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA’S REPRESENTATION AT COP26 GLASGOW

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

On page 5, the Minister said that “Bermuda is the first Overseas Territory to participate in the UK Government’s Blue Shield Programme . . .” Can the Minister provide details in regard to the arrangement that is in place for the Bermuda Blue Shield Programme, and what Bermuda’s responsibilities will be?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. The programme is totally funded by the UK Government. We do not have any details as to the cost that they will be deploying for the programme, particularly our participation. It will be open to other territories, so it may be a wider allotment of what they are doing.

But we are the first, as my Statement says, to be a part of it. But all of the funding related to this, Bermuda's responsibilities will be outlined to us further on as we engage further with the UK Government.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Go ahead. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: So, we are at the starting point of this relationship.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: And our roles and responsibilities have not been defined yet?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. We are to start, but the UK Government has already commissioned the technology that we will be using as part of the programme. But yes, we are at the start of it. And there will be, obviously, you know, as the process has begun more will be shared with us and we will have more discussions with the UK Government as other components are put forward.

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or new question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I am done, thanks.

The Speaker: You are done? Okay.

Deputy Premier, that was the only Member who had questions for you.

We will now move on. The next Statement this morning that has questions is the Statement by the Minister of Education in reference to the COVID-19 update in the schools. And, Minister, you have a question from MP Jackson.

MP Jackson, would you like to put your question?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: COVID-19 UPDATE IN SCHOOLS

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, thank you.

The Minister has made it very clear that it would take 80 per cent of parental consent before schools would be opened—that is, consent for testing. I am just curious, what percentage of children do not have the consent and are still not in school?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, [and I thank that Honourable Member] for asking that question. Mr. Speaker, I can endeavour to get that information. But from my understanding, all of our children have consent to the pre-entry. I do want to make sure that is clear.

It is the pre-entry of testing that gets you into the school. And then the ongoing saliva screening is something that is a different regime. So, from my understanding, all of our students who want to be, who should be in school, are in school.

I have heard that there is a cohort of parents who refuse to test their children and want to keep them home. And that is a policy that we are addressing. And I have asked for that data, and I will endeavour to get those data to the House so we can know that.

But from my understanding, if it does exist, it is a very, very small number of persons who have not availed themselves of the pre-testing regime.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister answered my supplementary question. Thank you.

The Speaker: Do you have any further questions?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No further questions at this time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, MP Jackson.

The Speaker: Minister, that was the only question for you today.

Members, the next Member who has indicated they have a question is for the Minister of Health in reference to the Minister's Statement on the update of COVID-19 management.

Minister, that question is from MP Dunkley.

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

QUESTION 1: COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to the Minister of Health, thank you for the Statement updating on the management of COVID-19. We certainly support many of the changes that have taken place.

Question to the Honourable Minister: In regard to page 5, where the Honourable Minister says, “[we are] looking at amending our requirements to ensure we are competitive.” Certainly we support that aspect of it. And in regard to that, is the Government currently considering any changes to the travel authorisation application?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

The purpose of the travel authorisation serves a number of purposes. One is to ensure that we are able to keep contact with those individuals who may or may not test positive and we need to trace them. However, admittedly, there have been discussions concerning making sure it is a little bit more user-friendly. So we are looking to continue refining the TAA so that we can make sure that persons are able to not only provide the information, but easily (particularly for those of us who, like myself, are not necessarily tech-savvy).

So to that Honourable Member, we are looking at the TAA to see how we can perfect it and improve its functionality.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Minister. Do not sell yourself short as far as *tech-savvy* is concerned.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: This would be a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, as you look to (and I will use these words, Minister) *streamlining the form*, will there be any consideration to reducing the fee?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that at this point. I think we would find that the fee of \$75 is quite economical, particularly in light of the numerous tests that persons do have included in that particular fee. So at this point, there has not been any discussion insofar as reducing the \$75 travel authorisation fee.

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

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: In light of the fact that the Minister stated that some of these changes are done, obviously to stay competitive, which is always critically important, and also for precautions in regard to health and how we have made some progress . . . but in regard to the competitive aspect of it, Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that some of our competing jurisdictions charge no fee for entry requirement forms, how does the Minister attempt to address that when it comes to competition and people making choices about where they will travel or do business?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I think at this point the \$75, recognising that some jurisdictions do not have a fee for travel authorisation, yet they do have fees for the requisite testing. So insofar as how much they are charging for a test as opposed to perhaps having no fee for the travel authorisation, we think that we are still competitive in that regard. It is only \$75, and the PCR test on day 4 and/or day 10, and the other testing as well as the departure test, most of the jurisdictions, the persons who travel from jurisdictions to Bermuda such as the United States require a test to get back into the United States. All of those tests are included in that one-off \$75 travel authorisation fee.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

That is your second supplementary to your first question. Do you have a second question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, those are all of the questions for you this morning.

The next Minister who has questions this morning would be the Minister of Labour.

Minister of Labour, the Opposition Whip has questions for you this morning.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: LABOUR ADVISORY COUNCIL ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Honourable Minister.

Would the Honourable Minister, with respect to the matter raised by the Minister in his Statement on page 2, this is where “the [Labour Advisory Council] will

be asked to review and opine on a policy document . . .” One of the policy positions they will be asked to review is, number one, “A requirement to notify the Ministry of Labour where an employer intends to engage in mass terminations of more than 20 persons” The LAC will be asked to consider whether there must be a requirement on the employer to notify the Ministry.

My question to the Minister is, What specific actions can the Ministry take at this point to intervene when we have mass terminations of more than 20 persons?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I believe that once we are notified that terminations are taking place within our employment establishment, we do make contact with the company. We do walk them through the legislation as it pertains to their requirements. And then we ask if we can have an audience with the staff so we can provide them with information as to how they can receive support.

But that is reactive at times after we may hear an announcement in the media or from a staff member who may complain. What we want to do is be a little bit more proactive so that we have the ability to provide these services in a more timely manner.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

What are some of the potential interventions or actions that the Government will seek to raise at the LAC’s review of this policy?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Well, number one, we have to deal with the matter on redundancy pay, ensuring that employees who are being terminated, their redundancy pay calculations are actually correct. Number two, we want to see if there is any capacity for the company to retain the individuals whom they seek to make redundant in alternative positions within the company. Number three, making sure that they have the necessary support from the company as it may pertain to future career advice. I believe we have been able to facilitate companies working with employment agencies to assist with finding their employees alternative employment.

Once the persons are made redundant, if there is no support by the company, then the Department of Workforce Development may be able to assist employees. If individuals are in financial need, we can provide them with clarity on how they can apply for the social protections that the Government supplies. So certainly, it will vary based off of different situations. But we want

to seek to provide services to both companies and employees.

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

Mr. Jarion Richardson: New question, please, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. We will take the other supplementary before your new question.

MP Jackson, put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is just a quick question for the Minister.

I am just curious whether within that policy there is any identification as to the reason why a redundancy is taking place? Whether there is a checkbox for if it is being outsourced or they are reducing the size of the business or any reason why redundancies are taking place? Is that provided in the policy? I just do not know, and I would like to know the answer.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I think those will be some of the matters that the LAC are going to be asked to opine on. So there is no policy document that has been produced. But those are relevant questions that we have to determine whether or not this should be some sort of a statutory requirement for a company to supply to the Ministry of Labour when these redundancies occur.

The Speaker: Supplementary? No. Okay.
Opposition Whip, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: LABOUR ADVISORY COUNCIL ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

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

With respect to the matter raised by the Minister in his Statement on page 3, number 4, still regarding the further amendments to the Employment Act that the LAC will consider. The Minister stated that one of the considerations for the LAC will be “workplace inspections by the Labour Relations Manager.” To that end, does the Honourable Minister or Government have a position on how employers would be selected for these reviews at this point?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to use the term *selected for reviews*. Most times, things would be based off of [the] level of intelligence or complaints received from employees. We have had employees complain about [the fact that] they do not have access to their employment files. We have also had employees in domestic settings who have complained that their travel documents have been retained by their employer. These [things are] being said. Once that complaint is received, we should have the ability to go into the workplace and request [to see] that documentation, or ensure that the employee has access to that documentation.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: None, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Further question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No further questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, those are the end of the questions for you on your Statement this morning. We now move on.

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

Minister, you have questions from two Members, in fact. The first is from MP Dunkley.

MP Dunkley, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: GANG VIOLENCE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Honourable Minister for the Statement this morning. On page 2, I believe, the Minister mentions the National Security Gang Violence Reduction Team, GVRT. Can the Honourable Minister please inform the Honourable House who actually makes up the Gang Violence Reduction Team?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. Good morning, Member. Thank you for your question.

The Gang Violence Reduction Team is made up of Pastor Leroy Bean as the coordinator; Mr. Darren Wood and Mr. Lynn Landy are the persons on a full-time basis. And then there are persons who are called in to deal with situations as they arise sometimes.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Supplementary, yes, Mr. Speaker.

Are the terms of their contracts the same as previously put out in the public domain?

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes, they are.

The Speaker: Further supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, further supplementary, Mr. Speaker. How is success measured for the Gang Violence Reduction Team?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, that question is often challenging and difficult to answer. And I am sure the Member, having sat in this role, can appreciate that. But what we do, there are things [which] you can measure. And that would be like, for instance we spoke about the fact that we had 15 persons who were in our work placement programme, and 10 received full-time and part-time jobs. So we would see something like that as a success. But the fact that we are out there, we are engaging the community and our hope is that persons are continuing to look at a lifestyle that offers an alternative to a gang lifestyle.

The Speaker: You had two supplementaries. A second question, then, would you like to do your second question?

QUESTION 2: GANG VIOLENCE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, second question.

Further on down on that page, the Honourable Minister mentions that the Gang Violence Reduction Team “administers programmes within every level of our public school system” Can the Honourable Minister please provide specific mention of what programmes are currently running in the public school system?

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. At the primary level you have the Kings Programmes, and the various schools have named their kings. One school calls their king “the Height King.” That is at the primary level, and that is where some at-risk students have . . . this is a programme where they come on a weekly basis. Actually, it is a few times a week. They come in, and there are counsellors and persons from the Gang Violence Reduction Team who work with these children on a weekly basis.

We recently started a Queens Programme in the schools that are identified as at risk. And that would be able to assist young women and to also encourage them at a very early age that there is an alternative to gang lifestyles.

So that would be at the primary school level.

There is an engagement programme that happens at the middle school level as well. And the Gang Violence Reduction Team basically can be found in our public schools almost on a daily basis. Then they also have an engagement programme at the high school level as well. And all of this is in hopes of continuing to have engagement and interaction and being able to constantly push the narrative that there is an alternative to a lifestyle of gangs.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

The Honourable Minister, are the GREAT programmes still functioning in schools?

Hon. Renee Ming: The GREAT programme was generally run by the BPS [Bermuda Police Service]. And I am not sure if it is completely functional. But it has actually been something that we are talking about [as to] if they had any benefit and [whether] to keep it going.

The answer to that, MP Dunkley, is actually it is, yes. But what we are doing now is we are looking at all of our programmes to see what we can do to give and make them even more effective.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Are any of these programmes offered in private schools?

Hon. Renee Ming: None of the programmes are actually offered in the private schools. But the private schools have access to the Gang Violence Reduction Team. And there has been occasion when they have reached out for assistance if they have needed it.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any further questions?
Your third question?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Third question, yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 3: GANG VIOLENCE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: At the very end, the Honourable Minister said, and I quote, "We must . . . rebuild the sense of community that has eroded in recent years." And I am sure most Members of Parliament will support that. So, in regard to that, Mr. Speaker, what are the initiatives and what is the plan to rebuild that sense of community?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I think on page 3 I spoke about what our goals are. And also on page 4 I spoke about the multi-ministry [approach] and the partnering with the third sector agencies and employers.

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

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes.

So, in regard to that, I acknowledge that. But a lot of that has been in place for many years. So, Mr. Speaker, what is going to be different this time around? And does the Minister have adequate funding to meet those goals?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. Some of the programmes that already existed continue to go on. And that is because they are programmes that work. One view that we have taken that is different, MP, is that on page 4 you will see where we said that to meet our goals we are taking a multi-agency approach. And we speak of the various ministries that we believe could have an impact on gang activity.

So as we move forward, we are looking to have this not so much as just National Security being involved in this, but also the various ministries that can have some input in gang activity will be involved and will sit around the table, and we will have [that] discussion.

And in terms of funding, we continue to work with the funding and ensure that there is funding for the programmes within the Gang Violence Reduction Team.

The Speaker: Thank you. Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, second supplementary.

Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I am very familiar with the cross-ministry initiatives from my time at the Ministry.

The supplementary, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has said in this Statement that we will not police our way out of this situation, and we fully support that. Can the Minister provide assurance that there is a very close working relationship with the police to ensure that all the goals are met in the most productive way and that offenders are also brought to justice?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Renee Ming: Surely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we do have a very good working relationship with the BPS. But the Gang Violence Reduction Team is still part of the Ministry of National Security.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you. I understand that.

The Speaker: Thank you. You used up all of your questions for this Statement.

Honourable Minister, there is another Member who wishes to put a question to you.

Before I acknowledge the Member, let me just say that, Minister Furbert, your Statement on Disability, there was a Member who has questions for that as well. So, I will come back to that one after we finish with Minister Ming.

Minister Ming, the Opposition Whip has a question for you.

QUESTION 1: GANG VIOLENCE

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

With respect to the matter raised by the Minister in her Statement, specifically on page 3 of 5, that reads, "[The Gang Violence Reduction Task Force] clients" Would the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what portion, or by way of percentage, or how many of the persons currently identified by the Bermuda Police Service as either gang members or persons of interest concerning gang life are clients, as described here of the Gang Violence Reduction Team?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, that question I would not have the answer to through my Statement. So I would have to revert to that Member with that information.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, no supplementary to that one. Do you have another question?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Your second question, yes.

QUESTION 2: GANG VIOLENCE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: With respect to that same Statement, second question: What is the plan of the Gang Violence Reduction Team when self-identifying gang members or persons of interest concerning gang life, as identified by the Bermuda Police Service, refuse the opportunities that are provided by the Gang Violence Reduction Team?

Hon. Renee Ming: I am sorry, Member. So you are asking me if the services of the Gang Violence Reduction Team are offered in terms of an alternative to a gang lifestyle? You're asking me, What will that person do?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I was asking, Is there a plan for the Gang Violence Reduction Team if a person turns around and says, *I don't want your help. I love the gang lifestyle and I want to stay in it forever.* Does the Gang Violence Reduction Team have a plan for that scenario?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, my response would be that the Gang Violence Reduction Team continues to engage the community as a whole in terms of building relationships. And I would think that the continuing engagement and hopefully through the relationship, they can deter that person.

The Speaker: Is there a supplementary to that or a further question? None?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No supplementary. Further question, please, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Okay, further question?
None?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Further question, last question.

The Speaker: Further question, yes.

QUESTION 3: GANG VIOLENCE

Mr. Jarion Richardson: With respect to the matter raised, still on page 3 of the Honourable Minister's Statement, one of the goals is "to prevent preteens and adolescents from joining gangs and engaging in antisocial behaviour by re-establishing positive social bonds." My question to the Honourable Minister is, How do you measure how successful you are at that, at that goal of preventing preteens and adolescents from joining gangs?

Hon. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I just answered a question with regard to, how do we measure the success of the Gang Violence Reduction Team? So I am

not going to repeat that. And I also answered with regard to the programmes that we currently have available through the various school system.

The Speaker: And I take it that the answers that you gave to the first question, as they are similar to this third question, they can apply?

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That would be correct.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: None. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We are going to go to the Statement by Minister Furbert in reference to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. MP Pearman has a question for you, Minister Furbert.

QUESTION 1: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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

Minister, in your Statement this morning to the House at page 2, you say that “the Ministry is in the process of working with the UK to have the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities extended to Bermuda.” What are the practical impacts, as you see them, of an extension of the 2006 convention to Bermuda? In practical terms, what do you think that would mean to the Island?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: The practical [benefit] is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of where Bermuda is as far as services for persons with disabilities. So that is a practical element. And then it gives us goals to work toward strengthening.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: The convention, by article 9, provides rights of access. Is that something that Government has prepared an impact assessment on?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So access has been looked at in many policy papers throughout Bermuda. So access is an area in which we are looking at.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

I mean, if the convention were implemented here, there would then be a legal obligation of access. So I am just wondering what that looks like in terms of the stated plan to extend the convention to Bermuda.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: So, Mr. Speaker, that is a very broad statement in regard to access.

So, we will be looking at access. But then legislation could be created to determine what access could be for our country. But that is a very broad statement, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

You used your two supplementaries. Would you have a second question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker, second question.

The Speaker: Put your second question.

QUESTION 2: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: What is the timeline in the Minister's view of the extension of the convention and the granting of access?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, we do not have control of that. But right now we are waiting for information back from Chambers.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Minister, I mean, are you committed to this? Is this something that Bermuda can look forward to seeing and seeing soon?

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

I am sure that Member would know that I am very committed to this.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, we will move on to questions in reference to the Statement from the other Minister Furbert, the Tynes Bay.

Minister, two Members have indicated that they have questions for you. The first is from MP Cannonier.

MP Cannonier, would you like to put your question?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is my video on?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No. Oh, here it is.

The Speaker: Yes. Oh! It was on that time; it has just gone off.

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

The Speaker: We see you now.

QUESTION 1: TYNES BAY WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

So considering [what] the Acting Minister said, that the I.C.E. AG is actually coming in and are going to spend about 11 weeks to fix these boilers, is he saying that both boilers will be fixed in 11 weeks? Or is this something that, we will have one fixed and then we will have a second one fixed thereafter?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Both of them should be fixed, Mr. Cannonier, Honourable Member, one after the other.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Yes, supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So considering the dire state that we're in right now, when exactly was the I.C.E. AG contacted to come in and assist us in helping to fix these boilers?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Honourable Member, you may recall that some machines went down a couple of weeks ago, which we did notify the public about. And they were fixed. The boilers were actually fixed [with some] welding. But now there is another further breakdown.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: You are saying in both?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Both of them went down, yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Another supplementary?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, second supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Some of these things, for sure, are difficult to try and predict. But these things, these boilers, having been involved in Tynes Bay, they do have a shelf life. Were we aware at any time that we were nearing the [time for the] rejuvenating of these boilers or having to take some drastic measures prior to these last couple of weeks when they were notified?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am glad the Honourable Member has asked that question. This information was [accessible] in 2009—at that time, the Progressive Labour Party spent \$22 million to upgrade the system. That was [in] 2010, 2011. In 2012 another report was done. I think it was June in 2012. But from 2012, Mr. Speaker, from 2012 to 2017, no additional work was done on the boilers other than just the maintenance. [The] money was spent on another place for the America's Cup instead of fixing the boilers that should have been taking place.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary from MP De Silva. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Minister, I know you are Acting Minister. But was there any correspondence, paperwork found in the Ministry in 2017 after the OBA lost the election that gave any indication of what they had planned to do going forward?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I do not think so, Honourable Member. I do not know. But I can tell you right now, from 2012 to 2017 when this information came out that it would cost about \$95 million around that time, June 2012, no further action was taken by our former Government from 2012 to 2017.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you. No. Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Cannonier, do you have a supplementary or a further question?

QUESTION 2: TYNES BAY WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I do.

I would like for the Acting Minister to provide some information as to *no investment* into the Tynes Bay incinerator going forward from 2012 to 2017. Because I am keenly aware of several . . . quite a bit of money that was invested in the Tynes Bay incinerators to operate during that period of time. So if he can provide that information, that would be great.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members can look into the Budget Book. It is all under expense and maintenance.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Provide that information, friend.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: It is in the Budget Book.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Tynes Bay, for sure.

The Speaker: Okay. Question, Member? Do you have a question? I thought I heard another voice. Is someone else trying to put a question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I have a second question as well.

The Speaker: Well, I will let the supplementary go because it will be related to that question that is being asked now.

MP Pearman, do you have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

I am curious, Minister, why did you stop at 2017 when that was four years ago? What have you done since 2017 if you are going to play politics?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well, I am not quite playing politics, Mr. Speaker. In 2018 a further report and study was done by the team down there at Tynes Bay. It was late 2018. We all know what happened in 2019. We got the information back in 2020, and the Government has been working on that process ever since then.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: It must have been a long paper.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, thank you.

The Speaker: MP Cannonier, you indicated you have additional questions. Would you like to put your additional question?

QUESTION 3: TYNES BAY WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE

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

Just curious as to whether or not the Government is now looking at any other way, to energy management systems?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I will have to get back to you on that. Not that I am aware of, but I can get back to that Honourable Member. But we are in a critical stage right now. And the Government will be spending additional money to get the system back up in place within the next—by February. And then that would hopefully last about three years while we are working on the \$150 million replacement.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any additional questions, Members?

None?

Supplementaries?

Thank you. We have MP Pearman who would also like to put questions to you, Minister.

MP Pearman, would you still like to put your question? Or did your supplementary cover it?

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

The Speaker: Yes. Put your question.

QUESTION 1: TYNES BAY WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Minister, at page 4 of your Statement you refer to the work for each boiler to be repaired for 11 weeks' period. At page 5, you say "we are aiming to execute the works in February of next year . . ." Are the works referred to at page 5 of your Statement the boiler repairs? Or they the \$150 million overhaul?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Just the boiler repairs, Honourable Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Grateful. And supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes.

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: The contractors therefore referred to at page 5 for the February works are the contractors I.C.E. AG out of Switzerland referred to at page 3, correct?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that brings us to a close of questions for that Statement.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I did post. My apologies for late notice, but I do have a question for the Honourable Minister. I think we have four minutes left in Question Period, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, we have still got one more Statement, too. But go ahead. Put your question.

**QUESTION 1: TYNES BAY
WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITY UPDATE**

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Oh, my apologies. Thank you.

Would the Honourable Minister in regard to the matter that he raised on page 4, the Honourable Minister said there are “many critical auxiliary systems at Tynes Bay that are past obsolescence that can just as easily shut down the plant if they are not soon replaced.” Would the Honourable Minister be able to tell us just how many critical systems there are at risk at the moment that can shut down the plant?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: At this moment I cannot tell you, Honourable Member. I will get that information for you.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplemental, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sure.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Does the Honourable Minister know the probabilities of critical failure at this point for those auxiliary systems?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I do not know exactly the percentage. But we thought that the boiler was fixed when we did the welding a couple of weeks ago. But things break down. And unfortunately, the system—as we said, way back in 2009 this was identified as a problem.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, put your supplementary.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The repairs to the boilers, if they get made and the auxiliary systems are not repaired at the same time, would the repairs to the boilers be made redundant if the critical systems go offline?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am sorry. Can you repeat yourself?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Sure. There are repairs to the boilers currently proposed. However, we still have critical auxiliary systems that can easily shut down the plant. If they do shut down, will the repairs to the boilers be redundant?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I cannot [make a comment] about that, not being a technician myself.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No further questions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

That does bring us to a close for the questions for the Minister of [Works and Engineering].

The last Statement this morning is from the Minister of Transport.

And, Minister, we have a question for you from MP Jackson.

MP, would you like to put your question to the Minister?

**QUESTION 1: ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL
—DESIGNATED DRIVER CAMPAIGN**

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Minister.

My question is around supply and demand. So as we enter into the Christmas period, the holiday season, what consultation or conversations are being had with the taxis, with the minibuses, et cetera, to make sure that there will be enough taxis and other transportation to meet the demands of the holiday-goers who may be in Hamilton and around and about Bermuda who may need to have the hired service to get home from a party?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you for that question.

Bermuda right now has 600 taxis and 150 minibuses that are readily available at any time to service the public. Therefore, we believe that the inherent infrastructure that is already in place will be sufficient to handle the demand over the holidays.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Will there be any way to track how much supply is out there that, of the 600 taxis, how many of them are working? And is there any consequence if the supply of taxis, as an example, is very low and difficult for clients to get transportation home?

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. So there is a legislative mandate for the dispatch companies for the taxis to provide a report to TCD [Transport Control Department] on a monthly basis. And that is the one way that we are able to track. But also, with the invention or the introduction of electronic media, it is also able to get data from them as well. So, we are—

The Speaker: Minister and Member, that bell signifies that we just used up the hour for Question Period.

I thank Members for their contribution. We have used the full hour, which is something that we do not always do. That was meaningful to have the interaction today around these questions.

But it also brings us to 12:30.

Mr. Premier, would you like to do the honour?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Deputy Premier here.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I move that we adjourn until 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Yes. Members, are there any objections to that?

Deputy, there are no objections.

The House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

Members, enjoy your lunch.

Proceedings suspended at 12:30 pm.

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. It is now 2:00 pm and the House will resume in session for the afternoon. We are now in session.

We had completed the Question Period when we stopped for lunch. The next item on the Order Paper this afternoon is Congratulatory and Obituary Speeches.

Does any Member wish to make a contribution?

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

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

The Speaker: MP Swan. It sounds like you are down in the East End. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Sounds can be deceiving. I am hailing from the East End.

Mr. Speaker, I [wish to send] condolences to the family of Rose Marie Douglas, a St. George's lady through and through who passed recently. She is from Pain Lane West in St. George's, and a St. Georgian all her life. I know her mother very well, Ms. Theresa Callabras; her late father, Earliston Callabras; her daughter, Rocheé, and her son, Romar; her grandchildren and her family and friends. And it is a sad occasion when someone so young passes. She has certainly had to suffer, Mr. Speaker. I know she has friends and relatives in this very Chamber, and I associate MP Foggo, MP Ming, and MP Richardson who is a very close, close relative, probably first cousin—

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —as well. I am very sad to bring these condolences. She was a very intelligent and bright woman, Mr. Speaker, when I tell you the type of ideas that she came up with in finance because she loved working with numbers. You know, just an outstanding person. I am sure that others could attest to that.

On a happier note, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate a young man fighting adversity, Mr. Brian Morris, who brought to Ocean View Golf [Course], the Johnny Walker Classic. He revived the tournament which took place many decades before—that I was a former champion of—but this is the sixth year. It was an outstanding event that I played in. I want to congratulate Mr. Jarryd Dillas, the overall champion [and also] Mr. Nick Jones and Mr. Camiko Smith, who were joint low professionals in the event. They slipped ahead of an old fellow who was nipping around with nine holes to play, but his day will come soon, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate how sad I am [as I send] those condolences to the passing of Rose Marie Douglas. And to George and the family, my deepest, deepest—and her mom—my heartfelt condolences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister of Education.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I ask that a letter of condolence be sent to the family of Florence [Patricia] Bell, affectionately known in my circle as “Ma” Bell, who unfortunately passed away this weekend. Condolences to her one and only son, a very good friend of mine, Dameon Bell. You know, the County Game and Cup Match will not be the same without Pat Bell in the camp yelling at us young’uns to *Move On! or Stop making that noise!* and those sorts of things.

Also, I wish to be associated with the congratulations to Mr. Brian Morris. I attended high school with Brian. He was a few years ahead of me, but we played football together, cricket together, and I know he is going through a tough time. But he is still managing to move forward with the things that he is doing. I have heard nothing but great things about the golf tournament, the Johnny Walker Classic that he has revived up there at Ocean View. That does happen to be in my constituency as well. I was pleased last year to be one of the persons to give out the awards; and even more pleasantly surprised that my younger brother had won the amateur award from last year. But again, just to associate with the comments on Brian Morris.

And condolences to the family of Ma Bell, or Florence Pat Bell from Hamilton Parish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, I caught your voice first.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and members of the listening public.

The Speaker: Good afternoon

Mr. Anthony Richardson: I would like to take this opportunity to provide initial comments to congratulate four international business professionals: Noel Pearman, Marlon Williams, Jasmine DeSilva and Deshay Caines. Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Anthony Richardson: —these four professionals launched the Association for Corporate Racial Equality [ACRE] and held a very informative virtual panel discussion on Wednesday, October 13. The theme of the discussion was “Connecting the Statistics to the Experience: A Conversation on Race and Bermuda’s International Business Sector.” The Association, they said,

was done in response to the historic and present underrepresentation of Black Bermudians in international business. And, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all colleagues will accept that diversity in the workplace is a very complex matter and I look forward to future contributions from this group. I also commend them for leading from the front because when you take these stances sometimes it does have an impact on your career.

And I will finally conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that the group offered that Bermuda has a highly educated and naturally diverse population. The data have conclusively shown that more diverse thought and inclusivity within organisations leads to better decision-making and better financial outcomes. As the global market is more competitive than ever, it is critical that Bermuda attract and retain the best from its full-time pool and leverages this natural advantage. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to more from this group and commend them for taking what is really going to be a very significant step in their careers and to which we will all benefit.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Richardson.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Certainly.

The Speaker: I am going to let ladies first. How is that?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would ask if the Honourable Member would like to defer for one second.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: I will.

The Speaker: Okay. All right. Premier, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that this Honourable House send a letter of condolence to the family of Ms. Renee Terrance Robinson of 10 Vale Close, Pembroke. Ms. Robinson was a constituent of mine and my thoughts and prayers will certainly continue to be with her children, Dean, Dawn, and Michelle, and her extended family during their time of mourning.

Mr. Speaker, I would also ask that this Honourable House, and I will associate Honourable Members with this, extend a letter of condolence certainly to the family of Ms. Terry Smith who was residing in the United Kingdom. Ms. Smith’s mother is Mrs. Carol Minors, a public officer who works here at the Cabinet Office at the front desk. I certainly continue to pray for her for peace and comfort and certainly for her entire family with the untimely loss of her daughter.

The final condolence that I would ask the Honourable House to send is a letter of condolence to the

family of the late Ms. Dorothy Adina Morgan of 6 Lusher Lane, Warwick. Ms. Morgan was a family friend of mine. I have known her all of my life. And certainly, her loss after battling a long illness will certainly be felt by her family, her children Sharon, Norman, Devon, Tamika and her extended family. She will certainly be missed by myself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier, thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution now?

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

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

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House send condolences to the family of the late Rose Douglas who hails actually from St. George's. She was an accountant by trade and she spent most of her life in the international business.

The Speaker: You can associate yourself with that.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Okay. And she spent most of her life in the international business but when she branched off on her own she certainly worked with small businesses and most importantly with charities. She also was significantly involved in the community, especially with the [Bermuda] Society for the Blind [now named Vision Bermuda] and the Bermuda Lawn Tennis Association. She was a great supporter of young people as they went into tennis. She was also very much the matriarch of the family. She fought a long battle, and she has finally moved to a better place, and I ask that we send condolences to her family.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Some Hon. Members: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I hear two voices.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I will defer to the Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister Ming.

Hon. Renee Ming: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send a condolence note today to the families of Kim Butterfield and Keenan Butterfield. They are all one family so you can imagine

that their family is grieving at this time. I just want them to know they are in our thoughts and prayers.

And also to our St. George's stalwart, Betty Brown. Anybody who knows St. George's, knows Ms. Brown and her family; you know about her husband and his barber shop, if you go back maybe 60, 70 years. So I want the Brown family to know that they too—

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

Hon. Renee Ming: —are in our thoughts and our prayers. I associate MP Swan and MP Foggo with those remarks.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: With both of those.

Hon. Renee Ming: Yes.

On a happier note, I would also like to congratulate someone who is well known to me, Ms. Natasha Trott. She is endeavouring in her career, or passion, I should say, of being a referee as she was the first Bermudian female assistant referee to referee an international football match. I think that she has more and the best is to come, and we continue to support her even as a country.

I would also like to extend congratulations to a colleague, Shawnette Griffin, she recently [received] a major promotion within one of our local financial services places. We wish her all the best. She is an inspiration to women all around [with her] hard work, dedication and sticking to it. They say if you stick to it, the runs will come. And I truly believe that this has happened for her, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I would like to congratulate Melissa Rodrigues McBeath on being recognised as a 2021 Rising Star in *The Bermudian* magazine. On occasion, Mr. Speaker, in my career, I have the opportunity to work with people who have joined the compliance industry with as much gusto and professionalism and consideration as I have ever seen. And Melissa Rodriguez McBeath has done exactly that and has been recognised for her incredible work in the financial services industry. She is one of a cadre of people in Bermuda who make financial services viable and contributes to our economy altogether.

So, I just wanted to congratulate another compliance professional for being recognised at just being excellent at her job and constantly representing Bermuda.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I would like birthday wishes and congratulatory remarks to be sent to Joslin Rogers, one of my constituents who celebrates her 103rd birthday today.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, that is a remarkable milestone to reach. I hope to make it close to that myself one day. Also, Mr. Speaker, [I ask that] words of condolences be sent to the family and friends of Karen Lorraine Campbell . . .

The Speaker: Take your time, partner. Take your time.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Especially her daughters.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Our daughters . . .

The Speaker: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Tamae and Ziara.

Mr. Speaker, she was a good person and a dedicated long-term employee of the Bank of Butterfield.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Our condolences go out to the family.

An Hon. Member: I associate my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any other Member?

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

The Speaker: Ok. MP Dunkley. You were a little faded that time. I was trying to catch your voice. You have your three minutes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like the Honourable House to send condolences to the family of Thomas Dickinson who passed away last week. He was a very devout family man, a good businessman, and certainly community minded. I always knew Mr. Dickinson as a man of character and integrity. And he was certainly devoted to his family and those around him. I was blessed to have known him young, and I actually served on a government board with him, so I had the opportunity to learn some things from him in our time in service together. He was a constituent of mine and I enjoyed the chats in his house because he paid attention to what was going on in the community. And that type of relationship is very, very healthy for a Member of Parliament to experience. So to his wife and children, deepest condolences on the loss of a good man.

I also would like to be associated with the congratulations to Brian Morris on the Johnny Walker Classic and all those winners in that golf tournament. I would like to carry this a bit further, Mr. Speaker, and congratulate Mr. Morris for his outstanding approach to life after being diagnosed with a very difficult challenge to face. He has tackled it head on. He has never given up. And he has demonstrated to people all over the Island that in spite of your challenges you can still live and be committed to whatever you are doing. And his approach and attitude are just simply amazing, in a very difficult period. And I hope God gives him the opportunity to live many, many more days. I am certainly pleased as a Bermudian to see how he conducted himself, and all the other Bermuda players in the PGA Tournament that we recently had. He certainly set the social media on fire with the interviews he gave and he is an outstanding role model.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also pass on condolences to the family of Reverend Charles Winston Rawlins, one of former constituents in my first constituency. What a wonderful man! He would look for you to come by to share his thoughts on politics, and I appreciate that.

And also to the Fowle family on the loss of Mr. Robert "Bobby" Fowle, who passed away just recently after a long and productive life. He was a Somerset man, as you would know, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: He was involved with a lot in his life and he had the love of many things that he did for the community, such as tennis and the ocean, and condolences to his family members on his passing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Any other Member?

There are no other Members? Okay.

No other Members. Thank you, Members, for your contribution at this time.

We now move on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: There are four being introduced at this point. The first three are in the name of the Minister of Finance, but I understand that Minister of Transport is going to present them on the Minister's behalf.

Minister of Transport.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

FIRST READINGS

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

COMPANIES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bills for their first reading so they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Insurance Amendment Act 2021; Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021; Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021; and the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next . . . actually, all four of them are in his name. That's right. Thank you, Minister.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: That now leads us to the Orders of the Day. For the listening public, the first item this afternoon is the second reading of the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Education.

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

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

The Speaker: It does; continue on.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 now be read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA NATIONAL TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the Bermuda National Trust, I am enthusiastic about these much-needed changes to the Bermuda National Trust Act 1969, otherwise known as the Act. I was happy to work with the Bermuda National Trust—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: MP Swan, you microphone is on.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I was happy to work with the Bermuda National Trust for the development of proposals to modernise and improve the governance of the Trust and to ease administration of what is largely a member-driven and volunteer-based organisation.

The Trust was formally established in 1969 by the enactment of legislation that sets out the detailed principal objects of the Trust. The Trust continues to be governed by public rather than private legislation. Despite the Trust being a private charitable organisation, the legislation affects members of the public directly and includes offences for breaches of regulations on

Trust land. Additionally, the Act provides certain tax exemptions and a ministerial involvement which would not be achievable via private legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the Trust is an organisation that is critical to Bermuda's sustainability and the preservation and remembrance of our natural built and cultural heritage. It is the mission of the Bermuda National Trust to protect and promote Bermuda's unique natural and cultural heritage in perpetuity by acquiring and conserving land, buildings and artefacts, and inspiring appreciation and stewardship through advocacy, research, education and participation.

The Trust cares for 277 acres of land, comprised of 82 properties that represent much of Bermuda's heritage including historic houses, nature reserves, islands and coastline, farmland, gardens and cemeteries. The Trust also includes three museums which display an outstanding collection of antique furniture, artwork and artefacts owned and made by Bermudians. I share the belief of the Trust that much of the history of Bermuda and her people can be taught in meaningful ways through its properties and collections. The storytelling illuminates Bermuda's diversity and helps our community to understand how significant our heritage is for our everyday lives and for our individual and collective futures.

Mr. Speaker, after years of considerable work, including extensive consultation with its members and affected parties, the leadership of the Trust sought support for changes to the Bermuda National Trust Act 1969. In support of the Trust's mission and responsibilities, it is important for these amendments to move forward. They would enable better governance and efficient administration for the Trust. They would be achieved by providing the Trust with more power and flexibility to run its affairs in keeping with the commitment to the integrity and aims as prescribed in the Bermuda National Trust Act 1969.

Mr. Speaker, in broad terms, the amending Bill proposed the following changes:

1. The bodies representing five specific charities on the Trust's governing Council would no longer see members appointed. Instead, these positions would now be elected from the membership of the Trust.
2. The Council's total membership remains at 13 with 3 members appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Minister and 10 of the members elected from the membership of the Trust.
3. The Council would govern its own procedure and business affairs through the making of by-laws rather than regulations.
4. The Council would be empowered to appoint an auditor without the approval of the Minister.

A small change is also proposed to ensure that all regulations will be made under the negative resolu-

tion procedure. These proposals were developed following considerable consultation with the members of the Trust, including the five-member charities, which are: Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda Historical Society; St. George's Historical Society; Garden Club; and Keep Bermuda Beautiful Committee. The need for the Trust to charter to an independent course was understood and supported by the five-member charities. This particular change would mean that the majority of the Council of the Trust would be elected save the three members appointed by the Governor on advice of the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, with those [brief] remarks I now present the Bill entitled the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 and welcome comments from other Honourable Members.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: MP Jackson, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you.

My few words are certainly in support of the amendments that are being made today. The National Trust has clearly grown and is a healthy institution that has certainly earned its independence.

I see that the growth and expansion of their Council membership, along with the independents, will provide the Trust with an opportunity to really move forward into the next generation. I am sure we will see some incredible developments from the National Trust moving forward. The existing, or the past representation of the membership, which included the list that the Minister so kindly explained and defined for us, including the Audubon Society, Historical Trust, et cetera, will be able to continue to collaborate with the National Trust.

Part of the benefit, I believe, of having had that representation on the Council in the past has given the Trust an opportunity to build what should be, you know, sort of infinite relationships with these other compatible associations and societies so that they will continue to work together in the future.

But I certainly do see that the maturity of the Trust has gotten to a stage now where having its own by-laws, being able to elect its Council members from its membership is certainly something that is a positive move in our position here at the One Bermuda Alliance.

The other piece too is that I just see that with this amendment the National Trust has an opportunity to really hone in [on] some expertise from their membership to help them to advance their cause. You know, I just kind of perused the website for the National Trust

and [noted] the magnitude and the scope of the activities that the Trust takes on. [This includes] being a sort of property management for residential rental of some of the historical buildings that fall under the National Trust. The management of certain properties, including historical cemeteries and the like, really requires some expertise. I'm hoping this expertise will come from the membership where there will be that skill set to be able to provide a strong and professional view of how to maintain and continue to sustain some of our historical landmarks.

So, without repeating myself, again, the One Bermuda Alliance openly supports the amendments and we look forward to the National Trust gaining greater independence and certainly moving forward with their mission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

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

I thank the Honourable Minister for his opening statements from his brief and also his background explanation as to the reason for this Bill, and the changes to the governing structure of the National Trust, and indeed his very elaborate and detailed explanation of the Trust's functions and what it does for Bermuda and why it is so useful and necessary to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the hallmark mission statement for the National Trust is to protect and "promote Bermuda's unique natural and cultural heritage, . . . forever." And that is important. And it is an august body that has done a great deal through the years and now in continuing to be a steward for Bermuda's natural heritage, Bermuda's built heritage, Bermuda's cultural heritage.

In terms of the Bill itself, my honourable colleague, Susan Jackson, MP, has addressed the Bill. We in the Opposition are in supportive of it as she indicated. And it is nice also, if I may, just as an aside, observe that when Bills come through this Honourable House with bipartisan support it shows that we are doing the people's business and doing it together.

In terms of the specifics of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, really this is about the governing structure and changes to the governing structure as the Honourable Minister alluded to during his Statement. It is about [the] selection of the board members. It is about changes to the by-laws which are, of course, the constitutional provisions for the National Trust. The real hallmark of this Bill though, Mr. Speaker, is that it is an increase in direct democracy by the members for the members and with representation of the members more definitively on the board, and that is to its credit.

Mr. Speaker, just a few more brief observations. The Trust has explained that the governing structure changes are there so the Trust can continue its mission to enhance, protect, support and educate Bermuda's cultural, historic and environmental mandate. In short, Mr. Speaker, the National Trust is a guardian of our heritage, of our natural heritage, of our built heritage and of our cultural heritage. And the motto of the Trust is really all that needs said, which is this: "For everyone, forever."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to make a contribution?

None?

Minister.

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

I thank the Members from the One Bermuda Alliance for their kind words and their support of these changes. Everything that they have said I did articulate as I spoke to this.

This has been a long-time coming. From my understanding in talking to the Trust, it is something that they have been attempting to do for just over two decades now. So, I am happy to say that we were able to work with them and work with the other member charities, as well as work with the Governor to get this across the line. And we should we see the Trust go from strength to strength as a result of that.

And so, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Speaker.

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

House in Committee at 2:32 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BERMUDA NATIONAL TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

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

Minister Rabain, you have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move all nine clauses since we all seem to be in agreement.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, this Bill will amend the Bermuda National Trust Act 1969 to provide for: (a) an increase in the number of persons who may be elected to the Council of the Bermuda National Trust; (b) the removal of appointments to the Council by entitlement; (c) the Council to make by-laws as to its rules of procedure and as to the conduct of the business and affairs of the Trust; and (d) the Council to appoint the auditor that audits the Trust's accounts each year.

Mr. Chairman, I will now go through the clauses.

Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 1(1) to add a definition of "by-laws," which are by-laws made by the Council under the new section 11A [inserted by clause 7].

Clause 3 amends section 8(2) to clarify that by-laws may provide for the procedure for calling and holding general meetings of the Bermuda National Trust, but only to the extent that the by-laws do not conflict with the provisions of the Schedule to the principal Act, entitled the Regulations Governing the Calling and Holding of General Meetings of the Trust.

Clause 4 amends section 9 to increase the number of persons who may be elected to the Council, to remove appointments to the Council by entitlement by repealing subsection (2), to re-word subsection (3) as a consequence of the amendments to subsection (1), and to provide that a quorum for any meeting of the Council shall be one-half [of the number] of members of the Council for the time being.

Clause 5 amends subsections (1) and (2) of section 10 by replacing the word "regulation," each time it appears in those subsections, with "by-law." This reflects the amendments made to section 11 and the new section 11A [inserted by clause 7].

Clause 6 amends subsection (1) of section 11 by repealing paragraphs (a) and (b), which empower the Council to make regulations as to the procedure of the Council and as to the conduct of the business and affairs of the Trust, and subsections (2) and (4) are amended accordingly. These powers will in future be exercisable by the Council through by-laws.

Clause 7 inserts the new section 11A, which empowers the Council to make by-laws as to its rules of procedure and as to the conduct of the business and affairs of the Trust. Such by-laws are not statutory instruments, but the by-laws must not conflict with any provisions of the principal Act or regulations, and must be approved by the Trust at a general meeting before they come into operation.

Clause 8 amends section 12(2) to provide that the Council is to appoint the auditor that audits the Trust's accounts each year. The section currently provides that such auditor is to be elected each year at the annual general meeting and approved by the Minister.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, clause 9 is a transitional provision which provides for the amendments under clause 4 to come into effect as of the date of the next annual general meeting of the Bermuda National Trust following the Governor's assent to this Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister, do you want to move the clauses?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 9 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 9 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 9 passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill, the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 be reported to the House.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you fellow Members.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

House resumed at 2:37 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA NATIONAL TRUST AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Thank you, Members. That now moves us on to the next item on the Order Paper. And again, for the listening public, the next item that will be done this afternoon is the second reading of the Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Labour.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Yes, sir.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —I move that the Bill entitled Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I bring to this Honourable House today the Bill entitled the Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021. The purpose of this Bill is to prescribe a fee of \$2,625 for granting ministerial permission to reside in Bermuda under section 25(1) of the 1956 Act, pursuant to the grant of an economic investment certificate [EIC] and amends the Government Fees Regulations 1976 to validate certain fees imposed under those regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the economic investment certificate was launched on March 1, 2021. The policy objective is to fully harness immigration as one of the major tools for creating economic growth for Bermuda while taking into account our limited space and ensuring that Bermudians fully benefit. It was designed to stimulate economic activity, create the environment for job creation and help market Bermuda as a place to reside and do business.

Mr. Speaker, an EIC is granted to a person who satisfies the eligibility requirements, including an up-

front investment of at least \$2.5 million in the Bermudian economy, by the Minister responsible for immigration for the right to reside in Bermuda for five years.

The economic investment certificate specifies that a fee of \$2,625 will be charged for an EIC, which is the same as a residential certificate fee. The fee has been charged and received from the eight applicants to date.

Mr. Speaker, the financial certificate fee of \$2,625 will be charged to applicants after five years when the EIC holder seeks to apply for a residential certificate which shall give them the ability to reside in Bermuda indefinitely.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill provides for the insertion of a fee of \$2,625 for an economic investment certificate. The Bill also specifies that where before the commencement of this Bill a fee of \$2,625 has been imposed for the grant of the EIC, the fee shall be deemed to have been validly imposed and paid as if it had been imposed and paid for after the commencement of this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the Honourable Minister for bringing this Bill before this House.

I won't be long, Mr. Speaker. I have read the Bill and the necessity of introducing the fee is clear in this regard and consistent with the expectations we have outlined in Government Fees Regulations 1976.

So to that end, Mr. Speaker, this is reasonable. However, Mr. Speaker, I would take the opportunity just to point out that fees, government fees especially as it relates to immigration, can often hit at a very inopportune time in a person's life and this would include other fees we have seen amended recently dealing with family members trying to remain in Bermuda. This particular fee does not deal with that issue. So, I just wanted to point out that fees typically do land at very difficult times for persons.

And to that end, would the Honourable Minister be able to speak to how the fees are calculated, to assure Bermudians and Bermuda residents that these matters are dealt with prudence and commitment?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

There are none, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the fee for this particular certificate was established in alignment with the current fee for residential certificates underneath the fee Schedule. Both ultimately give persons the ability to reside in Bermuda, so we thought that the most appropriate thing to do was to ensure that the fees are aligned with each other.

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy Speaker.

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

House in Committee at 2:43 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

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

Minister Hayward, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, the Bill seeks to amend the Government Fees Regulations 1976 and to validate certain fees imposed under those Regulations.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends Head 6 of the Schedule to the Government Fees Regulations 1976 (fees prescribed under the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956), to insert new paragraph (15A) which prescribes a fee of \$2,625 for granting Ministerial permission to reside in Bermuda under section 25(1) of the 1956 Act, pursuant to the grant of an economic investment certificate. This fee is the same as the fee imposed under paragraph (16)(d) for grant of a residential certificate under section 32(5) of the 1956 Act.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

No further speakers?

Minister, do you want to move those two clauses?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 and 2 be now approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, I now move clause 3.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, clause 3 validates any fee of \$2,625 imposed under paragraph (16)(d) of Head 6 of the Schedule to the Government Fees Regulations 1976 in respect of the grant of Ministerial permission to reside in Bermuda pursuant to the grant of an economic investment certificate, by deeming the fee to have been imposed and paid under the new paragraph (15A) inserted by clause 2.

The Chairman: Any speakers to clause 3?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: MP Richardson, continue.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Would the Honourable Minister assist with a point of clarification in that when looking at Government Fees Regulations 1976, and this validation under clause 3 saying that any fee that has been paid under [paragraph] (16)(d) . . . and Mr. Chairman, with your permission I would read [paragraph] (16)(d) just to make sure we are clear.

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

“(d) on the issue of a residential certificate,” (meaning the section, it relates) to persons who freehold property and are eligible for residential certificate.

Would the Honourable Minister explain why the validation is necessary as it appears? And I believe he spoke to applications that have been made and were successful already under this, and they are being attributed, it seems, to the economic investment certificate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: So what that particular clause establishes is that where fees were paid for the economic investment certificate granted, they had to have been paid according to law. And so, those certificates which were inappropriately paid under the paragraph

(16)(d), are now deemed to have been paid under the new inserted paragraph. So it creates that level of continuity between the provision that was used to accept the fees, validating the fees under the appropriate section of legislation that is now in place.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Continue, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, sir.

So, this means that there wasn't that provision before to attribute these fees to the economic investment certificate, so it was used as a kind of . . . I don't know, a workaround just to facilitate the process. Would that be fair, Honourable Minister?

Hon. Jason Hayward: I would not use the terminology that it was used as a "workaround." When the economic investment certificate was actually implemented, it was a form of a residential certificate, albeit not under the relevant section that was prescribed under [paragraph] (16)(d).

As a result, now we have section 15A which is specific to the relevant clause in the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act and so we are just ensuring that fees are paid underneath the appropriate fee Schedule.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Richardson, are you fine?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I am fine, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister, do you want to move clause 3?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, I now move clause 3.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clause 3 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, I now move the preamble.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, MP Richardson.

Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried: The Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed.]

House resumed at 2:49 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy, much appreciated.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are no objections.

The Bill has been reported to the House as printed.

Members, that brings us to the end of the Orders for today. And I would just like to do the third readings at this point.

Minister of Education, would you like to do your third readings?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none, continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****BERMUDA NATIONAL TRUST
AMENDMENT ACT 2021**

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

Thank you, Minister.

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

[Motion carried: The Bermuda National Trust Amendment Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Labour.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are no objections. Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT
AND VALIDATION ACT 2021**

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Government Fees Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members, thank you, Minister, for your contribution today everyone.

And we are now at that point where the Premier or Deputy Premier . . .

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

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, yes.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I so move, if you allow me—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I so move that we adjourn until December 10, at 10:00 am.

The Speaker: Correct.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Does any Member wish to speak to that?

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

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker.

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

The Speaker: Yes, sir.

COVID-19—FREEDOM OF CHOICE FOR PREVENTION AND/OR TREATMENT

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, this morning I read online some good news. The report said that no one is in the hospital, and it is the first time since August. With that I want to thank and congratulate the Government on the policy, the health care workers and all the frontline workers who are responsible for that, including the other doctors who I will talk about later.

Mr. Speaker, this morning the Minister said it correctly. We must stop the spread of this virus. And we all know that vaccines do not stop the spread of the virus. It is a proven fact that the face mask and washing hands and keeping physical distance, as the Minister announced this morning, are the three things that stop the spread of the virus. You have got to wear your mask.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Government has been steadfast in their policy and it has proven to work. Even the vaccines have been mostly effective in curbing the spread . . . not curbing the spread, but if one catches [the virus] the seriousness of it is cut if one has the vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, I saw on television Monday night, one of the doctors came on and they were pushing for people to take the vaccine. What sort of annoyed me is that it made no mention about wearing the mask, social distancing, or the washing of hands. I think with any message we do on TV, or wherever, we need to start a statement with that and finish with that, Mr. Speaker. I even heard on one (not Monday night, another show) the one doctor say that if you take the shot you will not die. Well, Mr. Speaker, we do know that there have

been some deaths of people who have been vaccinated. I am not criticising the vaccination; I think that is the choice of the patient and their doctor. None whatsoever! So, I do not have a problem with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me go on to say that in September a public piece came out attributed to a doctor who said that he had treated 250 patients, some had been vaccinated, some had been unvaccinated. And he did say that the unvaccinated group were far more sick than the vaccinated group. Mr. Speaker, what he did say was that he treated them and no one died, the whole 250. And he was not using the method, the protocols that the Health Ministry has put in place.

Whether we accept it or not, there are people who for health or for religious or personal reasons will not take the vaccine. And I suppose we have to think in these terms: If you have got to sign a waiver to take a medicine prescribed by a doctor, or anyone in the medical field, you would think twice. *Why am I signing a waiver?* I would get suspicious there. Unlike the vaccines that we took when we went to school for smallpox and measles and whatever, you got them and they lasted a lifetime. There was no controversy with that.

Mr. Speaker, what this doctor said when he released his paper in September was, *I take an oath. All physicians take an oath to first do not harm people.* So if a doctor prescribes a medicine for you, who are insurance companies, who do not take an oath in the medical field, to say they are not going to pay for it? The insurance company does not . . . their stance on this here should not be overpowering the oath that all doctors have to take. No doctor is going to prescribe a medicine for you that he thinks won't work, Mr. Speaker.

And as this doctor, Dr. Kyjuan Brown, said, our main objective is to educate the variety of treatments which are available. I think that goes for any doctor. Some doctors will treat one ailment different from the other, and not prescribe the same medicine. (I am told.) But if you have insurance the prescriptions that they prescribe are paid for by the insurance company. And he also said vaccinated patients are still getting very ill from the disease.

But it goes to show that . . . it tells me that . . . well, what is out there now is people seem to think, are saying, that the virus is spread by unvaccinated people. The vaccine will not stop a person from spreading it. Again, I will repeat it. Nor will it stop you from catching the virus. But what it does, and it is a proven fact . . . your sickness will not be as severe, even though there have been some deaths [among] those who have been vaccinated and more deaths [among] those who have been unvaccinated. That is clear to me. But we govern for all people. And if all people do not want to take it for the reasons that I said earlier, then what we should be advising is that, *Hey, if you don't do this, you should be doing that.* We have to protect everybody. And we want to protect [against] the spread of it.

So, if one is being treated by . . . there are numerous doctors in Bermuda that prescribe Ivermectin for this here, with success. Dr. Brown had 250 at that date (that was in September), and had not lost a patient, the unvaccinated. And he said, let me repeat, that the unvaccinated were far sicker than the vaccinated. Even though it is the case, he did not lose any of them. And Mr. Speaker, that is why, I must say, I am a bit annoyed that the insurance companies have taken it upon themselves to tell a doctor, in other words, *What you prescribed for your patient, we are not going to pay for, even though it is successful.*

Now, we know the insurance companies are not paying for the vaccine. And there is no liability to them or to the big pharma who made the vaccine, because you have got to sign a waiver. I don't know why they won't pay because they paid for Ivermectin before. And an insurance company really shouldn't be questioning a doctor based on a doctor who has a licence in Bermuda to practice, after taking the exams and the training, and taking an oath. They should not be telling a doctor what to prescribe, and that is what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Government, I said it last week, or the Ministry, that I think you need to advise the insurance companies that they should pay for Ivermectin because it is having success. Because Ivermectin is saving lives and the vaccine is saving lives, [but] they chose not to pay for Ivermectin because it is not one of the protocols that the Government is following. And that is okay. But because the Government is . . . and some doctors are following one protocol, it doesn't mean that the other doctors who are following the other protocol are wrong. Dr. Kyjuan Brown can tell you that. He had 250 patients and not one of them lost . . . he did not lose any of them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that what I am saying this afternoon will not appear in the papers because the media seems to have taken—worldwide, Bermuda is no exception—a stance that they are not going to print anything about any adverse effects of taking the vaccine. Oh, they are not doing that. And big pharma is making all the money. And, again, Mr. Speaker, I will not take [any] medicine, I don't care whatever it is, where I have to sign a waiver that releases the company that made it from any type of liability. There has got to be something wrong there, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I am calling on the Government to have this conversation with the insurance companies because there have been successes, not only from Dr. Kyjuan Brown, [but also] from other doctors, a couple of doctors . . . when I say *a couple*, I don't mean a couple. Normally when we say "a couple" it is two. But there are a few doctors in this country who are prescribing Ivermectin and whatever else, and the insurance companies should be paying for that medication, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. I represent constituency 5. I have constituents who approve of the vaccination, and I have some constituents who approve of the Ivermectin and have taken both. I have to represent all of them—those who take the vaccination and those who take Ivermectin and whatever else the doctors prescribe for them. I cannot remain quiet whilst they are going through another protocol and the insurance companies are not paying, even though these folks have paid their premiums up to date, so the medicine is totally under their premiums and the insurance companies won't pay.

This is so unfair. They are acting like a dictatorship where they are going to tell you what to prescribe for your patients. They are not doctors. They are not medical doctors. They do not know that patient like the doctor does. And they should not be questioning the doctors' prescriptions, what he prescribes for his patients, particularly when it works!

So, again, Mr. Speaker, let me finish where I started off. I thank the Government for the policy because no one is in hospital as I read online and that is a good thing. But please do not forget all the people—all of the people, including those who are vaccinated and those who are unvaccinated. Do not forget the doctors, those who followed the protocols set by the Health Department and those who follow another protocol. Both are working, both protocols are working. So we cannot be . . . Mr. Speaker, I will always fight discrimination anywhere. I have fought it all my life and I cannot stop and say nothing when I see discrimination right before my eyes. And some people are condoning it. You cannot do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. It is much appreciated.

Any other Member who would like to make a contribution at this time?

Any other Member?

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

The Speaker: MP Foggo.

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

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—FREEDOM OF CHOICE FOR PREVENTION AND/OR TREATMENT

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the speech coming from the previous speaker, I feel compelled to weigh in to this debate on the same line and length as the speaker who just took his seat.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I grew up in a country where one's medical health is something that is personal between their doctor and themselves and how

one chooses, if they are sick, to combat that illness. As long as they are going through legal means, it is their basic human right to do whatever is necessary to ensure optimal health for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the speaker who just took his seat spoke about situations where people have had to sign waivers so that if they experienced adverse complications pharmaceutical companies are not held liable, where Governments are not held liable if they put in regulations that support the same direction as what has been advised by health organisations. And, Mr. Speaker, when there are other avenues on top of that where one can try and maintain optimal health, and if it has the blessing of their doctor, one would think that this would be sacrosanct for that person to indeed engage in that methodology to ensure their health.

If, as the speaker who just took his seat said, doctors are writing prescriptions using methodologies which may not enjoy the, I guess, I don't want to say *approval*, but enjoy the consent of those who operate in the health area, it should not be where that particular individual or individuals are, if you will, being punished.

I think that any measure that is going to render someone in a better state of health, again, as long as they are engaging in legal means, would be welcomed because prolonged sickness sometimes greatly impacts governments in that they find where sometimes they have to kick in and support. And so when we are seeing constituents who are complaining that they are having to pay \$600 for a prescription which is a substance that for the last 40 years or so has been accepted medically, and insurance companies are saying, *We are not covering this*, it raises all sorts of question marks.

As far as I am concerned, I think that in this current environment where we have seen worldwide countries being plagued by the COVID-19 virus, I would think that engaging in measures that have proven to work would be something that any government would want because, clearly, and I believe it was in Florida where the new medical officer that was instated there quite a few months back made it very clear that vaccines alone (speaking state wide) will not get us there. And so while I am not saying that anyone in particular has said no to this, it is, I think, a question for Government to look at from the view of if we want to be on top of this, perhaps we should ensure that other methodologies are available more readily to persons, especially if it speaks to affordability to persons who are seeking to ensure that they do their part in this fight against COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I think I can safely say that all of us on both sides of the fence, OBA/PLP, and every Member that sits in your respectful House wants to ensure that we win this war against COVID-19.

Like the Honourable Member who just spoke, I too can attest to the fact that there are several doctors who I know, several, and if I am to believe the intelligence that comes to me, it is more than several who

prescribe medicines such as Ivermectin, and those doctors have had a high level of success. And so I would say vaccines, Ivermectin, whatever tools are available in our fight against COVID-19, that we should readily utilise those tools to ensure that our people get through this war successfully. And I do call it a war, Mr. Speaker.

I would hope that those insurance companies would have a revisit on this policy of not trying to—because we do pay our insurance premiums—that they would revisit that policy and include this medication so that persons do not find themselves paying exorbitant amount of monies. Further to that, I do not think that any of those insurance companies have a crystal ball where they could say hand over heart that the doctor who is prescribing that medication, let's say for instance, Ivermectin, is prescribing it for an individual who is suffering from COVID-19.

I do believe that medical information is still considered confidential information between the patient and their doctor. And I think it is very presumptuous of insurance companies to assume . . . given if the person who just took their seat is correct, if it used to be covered, I think it is very presumptuous of them to assume that it is being used for COVID-19 in all instances and take the position that they are not going to cover this particular medication under insurance.

As has been stated, those of us who work, and even some of us who do not work, have insurance coverage. And we expect under our coverage to be able to access certain medications. After all, that is why we invest our monies in these insurance companies who make billions of dollars with those monies. And certainly they should be at least, I guess, honouring their side of the contract by providing the funding to cover these medications.

Mr. Speaker, we all have to do our part in combating COVID-19. I get that. But by applying practices that many would consider discriminatory, I do not think it brings us closer to winning that war. We all know that science is dynamic and constantly changing. And given the vast amount of evidence that has been acquired throughout this year with respect to COVID-19, I would think that the intelligence demonstrates that, *Okay, we just cannot employ this technique*. If we really want to get on top of things, we must be open enough and determined enough and use all weaponry at our hands to overcome this battle that we find ourselves in. We know the impact that it has had on our economy. We know the impact that it has had on our loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is not one person who through all of this who does not want to see a successful control being realised through all of this where, just like with the flu pandemic we can now walk around fairly freely, even though millions of people still die from the flu every year. We still have flu shots and the like that help tremendously, and other medications that help tremendously in the war against the flu where we do not operate as though we are behind the eight

ball. We operate from a position of strength. We operate with confidence knowing that for the most part we can beat that.

We need to arrive at that same place with respect to COVID-19. And so I for one feel that it is incumbent upon us as a community to be able to have the freedom to employ all successful methodologies that will allow us to get into the space that we all desperately wish to be in. We want to see Bermuda return to the days of pre . . . well, 2019. We are working tirelessly to bring about those sorts of conditions so that we can get back to operating in the same manner, if not in a better manner than what we currently are doing, and even than what we were operating at in 2019, if we can realise a better state.

Mr. Speaker, I again hope that our community partners are listening and feel open enough to want to operate in a way that will allow us more readily, more speedily, more effectively to fight this war against COVID-19. And I want to thank all of those persons who have done their part in trying to do so, the doctors, the Health Department, the Government, all of the different actors who are working tirelessly to get on top of this. And I think the order of the day is a multi-pronged approach that will get us where we need to be. And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

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

The Speaker: I hear a voice; I am trying to recognise the voice.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am trying to—

The Speaker: MP Dunkley. MP Dunkley, you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—NEED FOR MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity this afternoon to speak on the motion to adjourn on a subject that has been discussed by colleagues on the other side of the House just prior to me. I certainly agree to the extent that if we are going to continue get on top of COVID-19, we must use a multi-pronged approach, as the Member who just spoke before me said, to deal with COVID-19.

And before I get into that, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that one of the things that has concerned me and I am sure many other people within the community, is as we have started and commenced our journey to deal with COVID-19, division has raised its ugly head

within our community on many different circumstances and issues. One place here is that as soon as vaccines were approved and they were started to get administered all over the world and certainly Bermuda, there was a division between those who supported vaccines and those who do not support vaccines.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go on record that I do support vaccines. I have had the vaccination for COVID-19. And I am very comfortable with the fact that I took it and I feel good after taking it. I do believe it offers for me a level of protection. But it doesn't mean that I throw caution to the wind and I live my life like I used to in 2019 and early 2020 before the virus hit our shores. But, Mr. Speaker, the division within our community over vaccination is something that I think has impeded our progress to a great extent at times because it seems whether you sit on one side or the other, you form an inherent bias that it is not helping in our relationships in trying to deal with the pandemic that affects each and every one of us in Bermuda and people throughout the world. So I would hope that we could respect other people's opinion. We do not need to keep bombarding people with what we believe is evidence on one side or the other, but we just need to listen to the facts as they are from reliable sources and move forward. The division stops us from dealing with the challenge we have, and that is COVID-19.

I say that to start my comments because it is a very important point. I respect those who do not wish to get vaccinated. But I do not believe it is the right approach to take. The vaccines have worked. They went through a significant and lengthy trial period. And now they were approved by the FDA, after many people said they would not take them until they were approved. Now they were approved a couple of months ago, so I think that is further evidence that they are an important part of our fight against COVID-19, as vaccinations have been all through the history of mankind. Vaccinations have worked. They have gone through trial periods, and they have worked.

Now, vaccinations for any disease are not 100 per cent effective. We know that. And so we have to guide ourselves and control our actions in an appropriate way. So I fully support the continued need to wear masks as appropriate, the continued need to social distance as appropriate and the continued need to practice the proper hygiene at all times. These are effective ways of controlling the virus, but they are not fool proof in themselves.

Now that vaccinations became a part of what we can do in our tool kit in Bermuda since earlier this year, that helps us be more effective in our fight against COVID-19. Now, more recently, treatments are becoming known and are effective in dealing with COVID-19. And I think we should take advantage of any treatment that is approved to deal with COVID-19 because while vaccinations will curb the spread of the virus and will help people fight the virus themselves individually, if

people get sick it is always good to have some treatment applications ready for them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the two Members who spoke just before me were talking a lot about Ivermectin. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not a doctor. I am not a scientist. But I have followed most of the aspects of COVID-19 very closely for a period of time, since January of 2020 when I first read about it early in the media and saw it on the horizon. I continued to follow it and stay abreast of what is important about it and tried to do the best I could not only representing people but helping to protect myself and my family and the people around me.

Mr. Speaker, the WHO recommends not using Ivermectin in cases with COVID-19, *except* in a clinical trial. Mr. Speaker, the Ivermectin was not approved by the FDA for the treatment of COVID-19. These are facts, Mr. Speaker. It is only approved by the FDA for treatment of intestinal parasitic diseases. Ivermectin is approved for animal use, but that Ivermectin is recommended not to be taken by humans.

Mr. Speaker, those scientists who studied this, and the FDA, and the World Health Organization, currently say there is not enough high-quality evidence supporting the use of Ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19. And so I think we should listen to those people to whom we provide the responsibility to give us good advice.

While I appreciate the comments from the two Members who spoke before me, I think that those that I just mentioned and the information they provide is important. And based on dialogue that is not in the motion to adjourn, I would look forward to hearing comments from the Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health, the Bermuda Health Council and [Bermuda Medical] Doctors Association [BMDA] in Bermuda on what they believe the correct guidance is. Because while we as Members of Parliament have the responsibility of speaking on behalf of the people we serve, and we continue even now 22 months into the pandemic while we continue to get in touch with our constituents about COVID-19 and many other issues, it is important that we hear [from] those who have the responsibility to do deal with these health issues.

So while I have cited information from bodies who have a responsibility in the United States and worldwide it is very clear that the FDA has a rigid approval process and they have said up to this day it is not approved by the FDA. Now, Mr. Speaker, if there are doctors in Bermuda who have been approved for clinical trials, that is another matter in itself. And I think, Mr. Speaker, in fairness, we will see medicines quickly be approved after coming into the conversation about the treatment of COVID-19. The simple fact is that COVID-19 is not going anywhere for a while. Viruses tend to stay [virulent] over time and this one has proven more virulent than many other viruses with just a new strain identified in South Africa just over the last couple

of days and it has been given a name by WHO just today, Mr. Speaker.

So, just like we were unsure about how to deal with COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, and then we found effective testing to help us to gauge the spread in our community and who had the virus, and just like we were unsure about how to provide an effective vaccination for COVID-19, that has now changed.

I think that rapidly, and very rapidly, there will be treatments forthcoming that we can all put our hand on heart and say that there have been enough clinical trials about. We are confident in using these drugs on people. And with the guidance from the world associations and the guidance from those who are trusted with the responsibility in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, I think we can move forward in our journey back to a more normal society in dealing with COVID-19.

As I said, it is not going anywhere. You have to learn to live with it. But we must learn to live with responsibility, with responsibility by ourselves and in a responsible way. And we have to—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Mr. Speaker, can I give one point of information.

The Speaker: You have a point of information?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, just a point of information.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I am happy to take that.

The Speaker: The Member is prepared to yield.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Member.

I just want to point out one thing. The FDA has approved Ivermectin for human use, for drugs in humans since 1996. I just want to point that out. That is why doctors have prescribed it in human use.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: That is correct, Mr. Speaker. But as I said earlier in my comments . . . and I stopped for the point of information because I think this is an important conversation we should have and I am interested in any information. But as I said, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said it is approved for human use, that is correct. But for intestinal parasitic diseases, Mr. Speaker; Ivermectin has not been approved at this point by the FDA for treatment of COVID-19.

And I think there is a difference there. It does not mean that with more clinical trials that this won't be the case. What it does mean, Mr. Speaker, is that if we are to push forward with it at this stage in time we must do it with caution and all the expertise that is available for us to do it. That is simply my point.

I am not speaking tonight to push back at MP Burgess or MP Foggo on what they said, I am just providing context in that the two most important things as we face this virus, Mr. Speaker, are the health of our people and the ability to get back on our feet. And as somebody who tries my best to live a healthy lifestyle, I will continue to stand up for the health of the people and what I believe is best for us to live that healthy lifestyle.

So I hope I have provided some context to this situation. I would hope that we could make some rapid progress on treatments, Mr. Speaker, because that is needed now because the virus is going to be with us for some time.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that as we continue to put a laser-like focus on COVID-19, and it is important to do so because it is not going anywhere even though the Throne Speech made references to it, I would hope that we also review what we have done in the past to deal with COVID-19 and look at some of those stats that we have, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister said this morning in the Statement that she gave, and I am not reflecting back on the Statement the Honourable Minister gave, but the Minister stated the fact that 106 of our loved ones have passed away since the advent of COVID-19 in March/April 2020. [There have been] 106.

Mr. Speaker, if you compare that to other jurisdictions, we seem to have a higher percentage of our population who have been affected and who have passed on. And if that is the case, then perhaps the Minister—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, I think that the Member is unknowingly misleading the House.

It is approximately . . . we have an approximate 98.2 per cent (I think) recovery rate which is in line with the rest of the world in terms of recovery for those who have been infected, based on the number of people who have died, and the total number of people who have been infected with COVID-19. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I thank the Honourable Member for that point of order. Recovery rate is different from people passing away from the disease. I did not say "recovery rate." I said—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I will say it differently. Then like the rest of world, we have—

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: —a death rate of approximately 1 per cent to 1.8 per cent, which is still line with what has been reported worldwide.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate that point of order. But I think that percentage is high. I think that as we continue to move forward and put ourselves in a better position to deal with COVID-19, we should look at the reasons why so many people have died in Bermuda and what we need to do to be a healthier community.

That is my point, Mr. Speaker, because every death, it is one too many. And I think every politician will say that. I certainly share condolences for the families of those who have departed us through the COVID-19 pandemic. But one of the biggest challenges we face, Mr. Speaker, is that there are too many of us in Bermuda who have unhealthy lifestyles. As we face increasing insurance premiums, increasing cost of health insurance, increasing cost of health care it behooves us to look at healthier lifestyles because that can curb all those increases that I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker.

So I speak tonight on a topic of critical and high importance for the community, one that is not going to go away. And I thank colleagues for raising it as well tonight. We have a lot of work to do. But with what Government has learned, we can make better decisions going forward to make our community healthier and more productive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

Any other Member?

No other Member?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would need to be the one closing tonight so—

The Speaker: Deputy, I haven't recognised you yet.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I was trying to be sure that all Members have had an opportunity to speak.

The Speaker: Deputy, I am going to say this. No other Member moved. I was about to close the House. You spoke up. I am going to allow you to speak which means the House will now close when you finish. If you don't speak—

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know that. Thank you for your indulgence. I was attempting to make sure that everybody who wanted to speak tonight would have that opportunity which was why I—

The Speaker: Well, I am giving you the opportunity, no one else. Let's be clear. No one else moved. So you have it now, or I will close the House.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Understood, Mr. Speaker. I am going to speak now.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy. So you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—COMMENDING AND THANKING FRONTLINE WORKERS

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, very much.

Now, Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. We certainly have had a full legislative day thus far and I am happy to have the opportunity to speak now on the motion to adjourn on matters which I think are important to mention.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, as has already been done, I would like to give recognition to our frontline persons who have been supporting the fight of the pandemic in Bermuda. Health care professionals and workers who have been flat out taking care of our country 24 hours a day, usually pushing themselves to the edge [dealing] with outbreaks and other things that happened, Mr. Speaker. And certainly denied their opportunity to be with their families, and even had to perhaps, even more than many, deal with the tragedy of death in front of them with those families who have also suffered.

So I take my hat off to those courageous health care workers in all of the facets that they work whether it be in our acute care, whether it be in our seniors care, whether it be in caring for our young people, paediatric care protecting our youth and our young ones who have just come into the world and their mothers, and all who have been in the health care business inside and outside of the hospital. You know, they all have been working to keep this Island safe, Mr. Speaker.

I would also certainly commend the people who have also been working to administer our COVID-19 apparatus, the testers, who are not only testing every day but are testing people as they come into the Island and providing testing services. I must say, Mr. Speaker, I am so impressed with our local testing teams that in my recent experience overseas I would agree that our testing teams are better than the testing experience that I have had in other countries, of which I recently travelled to. And I believe that our young people, who seem to be the largest constituency of the staff, are just fantastic.

I perhaps am just echoing what others in the House would echo as well. I am so pleased and proud

of all those who have been over the past two years participating in this effort to fight COVID-19 and assist us in protecting our shores.

SHORTAGE OF CHRISTMAS TREES

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, having said that, I would like to touch on a few other interesting things with the upcoming season.

I think we have heard reports that we may actually have a shortage of Christmas trees this year, Mr. Speaker, very unfortunate. But I know from the responsibilities in my Ministry that this has nothing to do with anything that Bermuda is doing. That has to do with issues abroad in North America with supply chains, with issues of labour and access to labour in some of the places where we might access our Christmas trees. So there may be a severe shortage which will make trees more costly.

I also believe that there will be some trees available, but not as much as we may have been traditionally used to as a country with those trees that we bring in from North America, those pines, that we traditionally have in our homes that give our homes that elegant smell of Christmas that we all love to have. So, obviously, people should be prepared for that. It is an unfortunate circumstance as Christmas for many will be a very special time, particularly if their families can get together in ways that they normally cannot.

But I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, if the situation as I speak now improves over the next upcoming weeks, the Department of the Environment and the team there will be happy to play their role in assisting to getting trees available to people in the Island. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we are now in a period—and certainly having come out of the COP26 conference and the decisions that the globe has realised it has to make—[in which] I believe there is a more heightened interest in the environment, Mr. Speaker, particularly locally.

Last night I had the opportunity to witness a celebration of some of the champions at the BUEI [Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute]. It was an inaugural environmental hero award ceremony held at the BUEI and a number of Bermudians of different backgrounds and different ages were celebrated for their contribution to protecting and supporting our environment. Scientists, citizen scientists, persons who are passionate about the environment were celebrated and given awards last night at the BUEI. I would like to thank all of them; some of them actually even work for government. And that is one of the wonderful things as well. So, a celebration of those people, because the environment has become an area of great concern to everyone.

And in some ways, because of that, Mr. Speaker, perhaps even the whole way procuring trees from North America may not be as an environmentally friendly practice as we have become accustomed to

because those trees have to be . . . and although they do not destroy whole trees to do it, Mr. Speaker, they do cut off a part of the top of them and that then has to be transported through usually a flatbed truck to a facility, then packaged, then shipped on a ship to Bermuda. Well, there is a whole lot of CO₂ exhaustion that comes out of that process which perhaps in this age is something that we need to think very carefully about as a country.

I am not trying to be a Christmas tree hater; I am not, because I love those trees, Mr. Speaker. But I also understand that in this time of which we are looking to have more concern for nature, this is something that we should think about. But as we confront a period where we may not have a shortage of Christmas trees, I believe that there is a local opportunity for a solution, Mr. Speaker. That solution is something that comes from the past. I would suggest that some of us who may want to make a change, or we are not going to have the opportunity to get a tree, think about a local option.

How about going to one of the local plant nurseries and getting a cedar tree that has been planted in a pot that is growing and use that as your alternative Christmas tree? Or get another tree species that you like and use that as your Christmas tree option this year. As you may know, although you are not an old person, Mr. Speaker, by any way, but others who are listening may remember that back before we were able to import trees many people took a piece of a cedar branch and put it in their house and decorated it and that was their [Christmas] tree.

I remember being told about that all the time by our elders that this is what they used to do before we were able to import all of these trees. They took cut a branch off a cedar, put it in a pot, and that was the [Christmas] tree in the house for the season. Well, as I have said we could go to one of the nurseries that are often growing cedars and use that, or another tree species and then when the season is finished, Mr. Speaker, take the decorations off and plant that tree in your yard or in a special place. You will have chosen a more sustainable option to celebrate Christmas by choosing a growing tree, but at the same time when Christmas is over you plant that tree and add to the proliferation of trees on our Island and provide a nature-based solution because that tree is a carbon capture, a natural carbon capture organism that can help to absorb the CO₂ from the environment and produce clean air that we all desire.

I am just proposing that, Mr. Speaker, because we often have to make [lemonade out of lemons]. And I think this is a great option for many locals to think about. Contact one of the local nurseries and see if they have a cedar that they are growing or another tree option, Mr. Speaker, that might be suitable that you might like and you could use that as your alternative Christmas tree for 2021. Just a thought to put out there for

everyone, all of our Members of Parliament, to members of the community, as we are concerned about nature, concerned about the environment.

What can we do here to make a difference? That is just one thing over the holidays I think that might be just a little different than normal, particularly if there is a shortage of trees and you want to still have that Christmas feel.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are just some of the thoughts that I would like to give people. But how much more time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

[No audible response]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I can't hear you.

The Speaker: Sorry. I was still on mute. You have got 11 minutes.

BERMUDA'S COMMITMENT TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

Hon. Walter H. Roban: All right. Mr. Speaker, I would like to just use some of that time to talk about some exciting things that certainly I am working on, but this Government is so proud of working on and were included in our Throne Speech around the environment.

The environment featured heavily in the Throne Speech this year because, really, Mr. Speaker, the care and attention to our environment is crucial to everything else we do. If we do not have a healthy environment, whether it be our oceans, our land or our air, Bermuda will not be a healthy place for us, for the biodiversity that we as an Island care about and rely on for our existence, and she won't be attracting persons for all those who like to visit Bermuda. If our natural environment deteriorates, some of the very features that make Bermuda attractive for people to come here and that have attracted so many of us and have such great pride in, will no longer be available to us.

So, we must care for our environment. And that is why within the Throne Speech I believe [the] environment featured so heavily because the issue of climate change and how it impacts Bermuda as an Island is so important for all of us to give recognition to, and begin to take action against climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I am particularly proud of a recent announcement that we made today. Well, first I will talk about the fact that with the support of the British Government we are going to have tools available to us that will assist us with the protection of our marine and ocean environment. The nearly 200 nautical square miles that circle Bermuda, we will be able to effectively provide surveillance management and protection with the Blue Shield initiative that we are going to be a part of. [We are] the first territory to be a part of [this initiative].

So, I am very proud that the British have invited us to be a part of that programme. And invited us to be

the first territory to take up and be a part of the Blue Shield which will greatly help the efforts that we are doing to build the Blue Economy, to build sustainable fisheries, to build a strong renewable energy capability with the use of our oceans.

Mr. Speaker, I was very excited about the announcement we made around fulfilling, which is a Throne Speech commitment, and if you just allow me to briefly refer to page 4 of the Throne Speech where—

The Speaker: Yes, continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —we talked about a Bill that will facilitate renewable energy technology testing products here in Bermuda.

We made an announcement this week which will support that effort. So that is a Throne Speech commitment. And it also was in our platform on page 27, Mr. Speaker, of the Progressive Labour Party platform on October 2020. So we are fulfilling a platform commitment [and] we are fulfilling a Throne Speech commitment.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I think this creates a great opportunity for so many who may have interest in bringing solutions to the table. There is a study, Mr. Speaker, which was done which states that right now the existing renewable energy technology options that are available will only take care of 60 per cent of the obligation to have net zero by 2050. So we have another 40 per cent of capacity to create. That is only going to come through innovation. That is only going to come through research. That is only going to come from experimentation. That is only going to come from us moving technology forward.

So, Bermuda has an opportunity to play a role in that process of getting the globe to where it needs to be in 2050. And I am proud that Bermuda has already made a commitment in its integrated resource plan, Mr. Speaker, to have nearly 100 per cent, 85 per cent of its energy generation from renewables by 2035 at 85 per cent, whereas now we are at the other end of the scale with 90-plus per cent. So, we have got to move the dial forward. And that will also bring about a number of other opportunities, Mr. Speaker. It will help to eliminate the CO₂ that transport produces, that the existing utility unfortunately produces from its use of fossil fuel and that is providing unfortunate aggravation to some of the residents in the Pembroke area.

So clean air is crucial and we are going to renewable [energy sources] to ensure clean air going forward. It will also deal with some of the issues of cost, Mr. Speaker. Think about it. If this Island does not have to import huge amounts of fossil fuel in the hundreds of millions of dollars a year, whether it be for transport or for energy generation, think about what that would do to your electricity bill. That would take the fuel service charge, the fuel adjustment rate that everybody has a problem with, which is about the cost of fuel, totally out

of the picture. As we move toward renewables, that particular component of your bill will disappear and will begin to disappear.

So that is the excitement and the opportunity that moving to renewables, that participating in the effort to bring innovative renewable technology to the table . . . those are the opportunities that face Bermuda and that we can grasp. And I look forward to working with the utility and all those who participate in the energy market to see us, with the regulatory authority squarely involved, driving and regulating and assessing the performance of our energy market, working with all those parties to see that Bermuda has clean air, a clean natural environment, is producing clean energy, and our energy future is contributing to that.

I am glad that I have been able to bring about Throne Speech commitments that makes us one step . . . I am glad that I am able to bring about ocean protection solutions that will ensure clean oceans for us, and I am looking forward to doing so much more with all of my colleagues in Government and outside of Government to make sure that Bermuda achieves those goals and that we are seen as a leader right now in the environmental protection [effort] in moving toward solutions toward climate change.

I am so happy that my Government is committed to these roles. I am happy and proud of the Throne Speech that we have been able to produce and outline an Economic Recovery Plan that is designed to re-energise our economic situation and put Bermuda on the right track, Mr. Speaker. So I am proud of all the work that we are doing.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to close and wish all of our colleagues over the next period until we come again a safe and happy period over the next couple of weeks until we come again to this House.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Members, I thank you for your participation and your attendance today. We trust that you will remain safe and healthy, and we will see you when we sit again on December 10 at 10:00 am.

Best to you.

The House stands adjourned.

[At 3:54 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 10 December 2021.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
VIRTUAL SITTING
10 DECEMBER 2021
10:00 AM***Sitting Number 4 of the 2021/2022 Session*

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. We are now about to start today's session.

Ms. Beale, would you like to lead us in prayer?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Ms. Kara Beale, Assistant Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Ms. Beale.
Members, the House is now officially open.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 26 November 2021]

The Speaker: The Minutes of the sitting from the 26th of November have been circulated.

Are there any omissions or amendments or corrections?

There are none.

The Minutes will stand as printed.

[Minutes of 26 November 2021 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

The Speaker: There are none.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There is one paper this morning, in the name of the Premier.

Honourable Premier, would you like to present your paper at this time?

**REPORT OF COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSSES IN BERMUDA**

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses in Bermuda](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: Members, there are six Statements this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Sure, Mr. Speaker. You will not object if I put on my glasses.

The Speaker: Continue.

**REPORT OF COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSSES IN BERMUDA**

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, progress in any society can be achieved in several ways. The history of many nations and peoples has shown that the past, no matter how painful or controversial, must be openly and fearlessly addressed. There is no requirement for people to agree a common history as shared experiences are often differently perceived and recalled. However, too much of history has been whispered or unrecorded. The Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses has afforded an opportunity to those whose voices

had either been silenced or ignored to openly tell their story and to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that it was during the proceedings of this Honourable House on the 4th of July 2014 that the late Honourable Member C. Walton D. Brown Jr., a member of the Progressive Labour Party, then the Official Opposition, introduced the motion which ultimately led to the establishment of this [Commission of Inquiry](#) [COI]. Aggrieved at community reports of land stolen from citizens of Bermuda, he characterised his vision for pursuing historic losses of land in Tucker's Town in this way:

"We have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to help correct some of the wrongs of the bad old days when justice was a fleeting illusion for many, and where the rich, the powerful and the connected acted with impunity. The theft of land, the dispossession of property, took place in this country on a wide scale and over a long period of time. The villains in these actions, Mr. Speaker, were oftentimes lawyers, real estate agents and politicians, but not exclusively so. The victims were at times the poor and the marginalised, but not always. What the victims shared though, Mr. Speaker, was an inability to secure a just outcome." [Hansard 2014 p. 2603]

The parliamentary debate that followed revealed that not only were there particular concerns regarding two of the most well-known expropriations in Bermuda—Tucker's Town and St. David's Island—but also concerns regarding widespread injustices in dealing with losses of land in other areas across the Island. The motion approved by this House was as follows:

"To take note of historic losses in Bermuda of citizens' property through theft of property, dispossession of property and adverse possession claims;

"AND BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House calls on His Excellency the Governor to establish a Commission of Inquiry into all such known claims and to determine, where possible, the viability of any such claims and make recommendations for any victims of wrongful action to receive compensation and justice."

Honourable Members will likewise recall that the then-Governor, Mr. George G. Fergusson, refused to issue an order establishing a Commission of Inquiry, stating in a letter read to the House of Assembly: "I have concluded that these concerns are neither so clear nor so urgent as to justify my taking the still unusual step of commissioning an inquiry under the 1935 Act."

Mr. Speaker, the Legislature in its wisdom approved amendments to the relevant legislation and as such, pursuant to section 1A of the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1935, I, with the support of the Cabinet, determined to appoint a commission for this purpose on the 19th of June 2019 and caused public notification

in the official *Gazette* on the 1st of November 2019.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will no doubt recall that the Commission of Inquiry's Terms of Reference were to:

- i. inquire into historic losses of citizens' property in Bermuda through theft of property, dispossession of property, adverse possession claims and/or such other unlawful or irregular means by which land was lost in Bermuda;
- ii. collect and collate any and all evidence and information available relating to the nature and extent of such historic losses of citizens' property;
- iii. prepare a list of all land to which such historic losses relate;
- iv. identify any persons, whether individuals or bodies corporate, responsible for such historic losses of citizens' property; and
- v. refer as appropriate matters to the Director of Public Prosecutions for such further action as may be determined necessary by that office.

Mr. Speaker, in advance of the receipt of the final report, the Cabinet took note of an executive summary which set out the procedures adopted as well as the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, the members appointed to the Commission were as follows: serving as Chairman, the retired Hon. Justice Norma Wade-Miller, OBE, retired Puisne Judge of the Bermuda Supreme Court; Deputy Chairman, the Hon. Wayne Perinchief, CPM, retired Assistant Commissioner of Police, former Minister for National Security, Minister of Culture and Human Affairs and Minister responsible for the National Drug Commission; Mrs. Maxine Binns, LL.B, Barrister and Attorney, former consultant legal counsel with Business Development and retired legislative assistant with the Business Development Unit; Mrs. Frederica Forth, JP, former vice president of a local bank and experienced realtor; Mrs. Lynda Milligan-Whyte, LL.B, JP, senior legal counsel practicing at the Bermuda Bar, former Minister of Legislative Affairs and Women's Issues; Mr. Jonathan Starling, Economic and Cooperative Development Officer, Bermuda Economic Development Corporation; and Mr. Quinton Stovell, professional land surveyor.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to these commissioners for their service and the incredibly detailed and diligent manner in which they approached the mammoth task. Mr. Speaker, the Commission of Inquiry decided that it should call for and examine evidence and then determine whether such evidence, taken as a whole, demonstrated a structural problem which was either historic in nature and/or which demonstrated systemic failure. Each case filed before the Commission of Inquiry was examined with the Commission, then determining whether the particular case represented an instance of a historic loss of land

by a citizen of Bermuda through *theft or dispossession of property, adverse possession claims or other unlawful or irregular means by which land was lost in Bermuda*.

To ensure that the work of the Commission of Inquiry was known within the community, a website was created. The website contained basic information about the background and composition of the Commission of Inquiry, as well as its operational rules and procedures. To attract further the attention of members of the community who may wish to make claims, the COI placed newspaper advertisements inviting persons to apply for standing, or if they did not wish to have standing to share information with the Commission of Inquiry. To broaden the Commission's reach, social media notifications about upcoming hearings were posted and periodic press statements were issued to the traditional media.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite Honourable Members to take note that the Commission of Inquiry [performed the following]:

- from April through July 2021 met with numerous experts for assistance in clarifying outstanding queries and giving historical context to practices that may have occurred in the past;
- adhered to all COVID-19 restrictions in place. Arrangements were made to accommodate those who could not appear in person, including commissioners themselves on occasion. Video conferencing software was used throughout all Commission of Inquiry hearings;
- held a total of 74 hearings variously at the Grotto Bay Beach Resort, Hamilton Parish; Willowbank Resort & Conference Centre, Sandys; and the Royal Bermuda Regiment, Warwick Camp, in Warwick.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission of Inquiry received a total of 53 claims: 18 were heard, 15 were denied, 10 were withdrawn and 10 were closed by commissioners for jurisdiction reasons.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will note that the report makes a considerable number of recommendations. These apply to each of the various cases considered and are divided into actions to be taken by the Legislature, private individuals and other entities. Mr. Speaker, the Government now seized of the report will examine the recommendations in detail and determine what can be done to address them. I would highlight for Honourable Members that the recommendations include the following:

- The Government considers establishing a permanent mechanism of state machinery to review claims concerning the historic loss of properties. The mechanism should be fully resourced with human and financial resources to address all claims and concerns post this COI, ultimately with a view of having a legal

framework in place to facilitate remedies and/or an award of compensation.

- Government ensures that the history of the Tucker's Town and St. David's Island expropriations are memorialised suitably by mandating its inclusion in Bermuda history taught in our schools, its placement in libraries and other repositories, and by erection of a suitable physical monument ideally situated in both Tucker's Town and St. David's Island.
- Government establishes an independent Land Tribunal to deal with all outstanding legacy issues involving historic losses of land in Bermuda and to make recommendations based on the findings of the Commission of Inquiry and any others that may emerge.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the Commission was greatly enhanced by a team of administrative staff, legal counsel, researchers and investigators. The final editing of the report was done by former Permanent Secretary, Mr. Robert K. Horton, and his oversight has proven invaluable to producing this final product.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that in fiscal [year] 2019/20, the amount of \$723,000 was budgeted for the work of the Commission. With the advent of the pandemic and the inability of the Commission to meet, hear evidence and perform its functions as intended, the time within which the work was to be done had to be extended. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, as the report indicates and as will be supported by eventual release of the appendices, this is among the most detailed and painstaking of tasks undertaken by an independent body. There can be no doubt that the work of the Commission was an exercise in determining the truth of painful histories and giving voice to claims that others rejected or refused to hear.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet Office determined to fund the ongoing work of the Commission, which unexpectedly carried on into this fiscal year and has done so from savings realised in the overall budget for Head 9. No new money was requested or required, and I can advise the Honourable House that there will be no requirement for supplementary funding in this fiscal year for this purpose. Whilst the final costs are not yet available, I will revert to this House with those costs once the final report is printed, the website upgraded and the appendices uploaded and the final service provider costs are paid.

Mr. Speaker, this will make difficult reading for some. For others it will represent the last mile of a race that they have run for decades. History is a delicate thing, Mr. Speaker. It must be handled with care and treasured, as it is in a fulsome understanding of history that we create a stronger present and a better vision for the future. I will invite this Honourable House to consider this report by a motion to be introduced for that purpose.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would refer this Honourable House to the Statement I made in June 2019. The words frame all that the commission represents and the Government's intention in addressing this issue: "Truth can be uncomfortable. Unearthing historic wrongs may be inconvenient for some. It may well be that some of those who were victims and those who committed wrongdoing have since passed on. But . . . it is never too late for justice. That justice can take many forms. For some it may simply be the opportunity to be heard and have their claims acknowledged, while for others it may confirm the legal standing they have long asserted. The process of providing justice starts with a step towards truth."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Continue on.

REPORT ON TRAVEL TO THE UK, BELGIUM AND USA

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House of recent [travels to London and Brussels](#), along with the Acting Financial Secretary, as part of the Finance Ministry's ongoing programme of engagement and advocacy with key stakeholders and trading partners. I will also provide an update on my work last week in New York as I again provided support to the Bermuda Business Development Agency in their promotion of Bermuda as a centre of excellence in climate risk finance.

Mr. Speaker, my visit to London and Brussels spanned the period from November 14 to the 23. During my time in London, I had the opportunity to accompany the Premier to the Joint Ministerial Council [JMC] session on Economic Resilience at the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office. The Council was chaired by the Minister for the Overseas Territories, Amanda Milling MP.

The cross-Whitehall departmental engagement included HM Treasury led by the Exchequer Secretary, Helen Whatley MP, and focused on building economic resilience in the Territories. It provided the opportunity to share experiences on managing economies post COVID-19 and the impact to some as result of the UK's departure from the European Union [the EU].

It was highlighted that as a result of external impacts such as COVID-19, natural disasters and climate change, Territories have been gravely affected

by the resultant fiscal and economic challenges. It was therefore agreed that the UK will work alongside Territory Governments to appropriately explore opportunities for infrastructure development and [provide] assistance in sound public financial management and effective fiscal planning, particularly supporting the diversification of economies through building resilience and investment. During the discussions we affirmed Bermuda's ongoing commitment, as a leading compliant financial services jurisdiction, to cooperate on meeting evolving international regulatory and tax standards.

Mr. Speaker, during that week we also had the opportunity to meet with senior officials at the Bank of England, including experts addressing financial stability matters and the Chief Executive Officer of the Prudential Regulatory Authority [PRA]. Bermuda's Financial Policy Council was established in 2015 as an advisor to me, as Minister of Finance, on financial system stability matters. Their advice has been an important input, as the Ministry has developed strategies and policies to address many of the relevant financial challenges that Bermuda has faced.

The UK Financial Policy Council has been operational for a significantly longer period, and it was therefore helpful to understand how the UK work and framework in this area continues to evolve. In addition, the meeting provided the opportunity to have discussions on issues of common interest and challenge. The PRA in turn were very complimentary about the work of the BMA [Bermuda Monetary Authority] and expressed their positive views of the robustness of the Bermuda regulatory framework.

Mr. Speaker, during the week we were also able to meet with the Chair of Lloyds, Mr. Bruce Carnegie-Brown. He then graciously hosted a lunch at the Lloyds offices which was attended by CEOs of Lloyds members, who also had Bermuda operations. These discussions reinforced the symbiotic relationship between Lloyds and Bermuda while also highlighting the important role played by the Bermuda insurance market in the UK risk mitigation programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Brussels segment allowed us to continue our advocacy programme begun in 2019 with senior persons in the European Commission and Council. We had the opportunity to meet with senior officials from the Commission's Tax Directorate, including a Member of Cabinet for EU Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni and the European Commission's Director for Direct Taxation, Tax Coordination, Economic Analysis and Evaluation. We discussed Bermuda's positive efforts to effectively implement economic substance requirements and country-by-country reporting.

We also had a dialogue on the recent OECD/G20 international agreements on taxation and key aspects of the approach being considered for implementation at the EU level, particularly in relation to third countries.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, just a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: With all due respect to the Minister of Finance, he is not following the Statement. There are many variations to the Statement that he is reading.

The Speaker: The draft and the updated version . . . Opposition Leader, your point was that the copy that the Minister is reading from is different from the copy that you have?

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

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the revised document was provided by nine o'clock this morning.

The Speaker: Yes. That was what I was about to say. I think the revised one . . . Opposition Leader, the revised copy should be on the SharePoint.

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

The Speaker: So you are probably going by the original draft that was done. But there was a revised copy that was put up there.

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

The Speaker: No problem. I was just trying to follow what you were saying. That is why it took a moment to comment on that. Okay?

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

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: You can continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. Continue, continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to have a meeting with the Chair of the Code of Conduct Group, Lyudmila Petkova, in the Council of the EU. The Code of Conduct Group is composed of high-level representatives from the EU member states and the European Commission. One of its tasks is preparation of the revisions of the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes. I am pleased to share that our meeting with Ms. Petkova was her first meeting with a non-EU country since she was re-elected as chair in January 2021. Bermuda's dialogue and cooperation with the Council of the European Union and

the Code of Conduct Group was discussed as being exemplary.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I also had the opportunity to meet with the European Commission's Director-General for the Directorate-General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, John Berrigan. Bermuda was recognised for our importance in the global insurance industry. During the meeting, we discussed the crucial role of insurers as investors in the carbon neutral economy and in helping the world prepare for climate risks. In addition to presenting Bermuda as a centre of excellence in climate risk finance, we also shared Bermuda's advancements within the crypto-assets regulatory space. This is an area where Bermuda was an early mover, adopting regulation in 2018, which still exceeds in some areas the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force. The Commission particularly praised Bermuda's work to meet anti-money laundering rules, which was described as *a model for other countries*. As my first visit to Brussels since the pandemic began, these meetings were a vital opportunity to reinforce Bermuda's outreach efforts within the EU and to strengthen the relationships with this important trade partner and regulatory partner.

Mr. Speaker, during the past week I once again had the opportunity to lead a Bermuda delegation on a marketing trip organised by the Bermuda Business Development Agency [BDA]. During this trip, Bermuda was ably represented by officials from the BDA, the BMA, the BSX [Bermuda Stock Exchange] and the Ministry of Finance.

The purpose of the trip was to inform key asset allocators on the crucial factors that make Bermuda a prime jurisdiction for climate risk finance business. The series of meetings, lunches and dinners provided an excellent platform for promoting Bermuda to important influencers and decision-makers. Ensuring the growth and diversification of Bermuda's international business sector is a critical part of stabilising and strengthening Bermuda's economy. Therefore, we intend to continue to support initiatives such as this, which are important for the expansion of Bermuda's client base.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would again note my strong commitment to take necessary action to prudently build a stronger, more resilient Bermuda. We recognise that having a thoughtful and strategic programme for engagement and advocacy must be a core part of our work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I believe you are on mute.

The Speaker: I was muted; sorry about that.

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

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

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a way of advising colleagues that a revised copy of this Statement was also distributed by 9:00 am this morning.

The Speaker: Both revised copies (of the previous [Statement] and this one) should be on SharePoint. I am just having Mr. Lamb confirm that they are, as they were sent early out.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, the first one was not on SharePoint a minute ago. Now, this one here is not on at this time either.

The Speaker: Okay. We are checking with Mr. Lamb as we speak, okay?

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

REVISED BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson:

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that on November 12, I gave a Ministerial Statement on the 2021/22 half-year performance. I also committed to report to this Honourable House on the updated [2021/22 Revised Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure](#) resulting from a detailed 2021/22 mid-year performance assessment. Further, I undertook to provide an update on the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on government revenues and expenditures for fiscal 2021/22. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with these commitments I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with the results of the mid-year performance assessment and advise on the revised budget for this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of measures taken to keep Bermuda open for business in 2021, after severe disruptions in 2020 to combat the spread of COVID-19, the Bermuda economy is estimated to have grown by 3 per cent to 5 per cent in the first three quarters of 2021.

The majority of the key economic indicators such as employment income, imports, visitor spending, construction activity and retail sales increased during this period. Although several of the 2021 key economic indicators experienced positive results, it should be noted that some of these figures such as imports, construction, and tourist arrivals and spending are below the 2019 figures. This indicates that the economy is moving in the right direction but has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Speaker, I will now speak to the results of the 2021/22 mid-year review analysis.

Revenue

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The original revenue budget estimate for 2021/22 was \$998.9 million. The Ministry estimates that revenue yields for 2021/22 will increase by a small amount of \$8 million, to \$1.007 billion. Mr. Speaker, key factors contributing to the revenue estimates include the following:

- increase in Customs Duty of \$20 million, or 7 per cent increase, over the original budget. The original budget of \$200 million was conservative based upon the unknown impact of further COVID-19 restrictions. However, as these restrictions were relaxed, we have seen increases in economic activity reflected by an increase in imports;
- increase in Stamp Duty of \$4 million due to the increase in land conveyances from the sale of real estate;
- decrease in Passenger and Transportation Infrastructure taxes of \$5 million. This decrease continues to reflect the slow recovery of the tourism industry due to the impact of COVID-19; and
- Payroll taxes remain on budget.

Expenditures—Current Account

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, original current account expenditure for 2021/22 was forecast to be \$903 million. Current expenditures for fiscal 2021/22, excluding debt service, are now projected to increase by \$56.9 million, which will revise current expenditures to \$959.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, the primary reason for this increase directly relates to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the submissions by ministries coupled with Finance Ministry's forecasts, additional COVID-19 expenditures are estimated at approximately \$21.3 million for this fiscal year. These additional COVID-19 expenditures directly relate to the impact of the third and fourth waves of COVID-19 which occurred during the April–May and August–September periods. The related rise in positive cases triggered a requirement for increased testing, contact tracing, lab operations, quarantine mandate and benefits related to the temporary unemployment benefit programme.

Taking into account the amounts that were included in the Government's 2021/22 budget, total projected spend for COVID-19 expenditures is approximately \$34.8 million for the fiscal year, of which unemployment and related supplemental benefits are projected to total approximately \$12.7 million.

The pandemic has also significantly impacted the operations of the Bermuda Hospitals Board result-

ing in reduced revenue and increased expenses, and consequently their need for further subsidy support. Honourable Members would recall the Statement made by the Honourable Minister of Health earlier this year regarding increases to the Standard Premium Rate to address the shortfall. The increases passed by this Honourable House were not the full amount needed to meet the shortfall of income as the Cabinet decided not to pass all of the costs to employees and businesses to reduce the size of the increase. This additional shortfall of \$11 million will be funded from the Consolidated Fund to ensure that our hospital can continue operations.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated in my Ministerial Statement on the 2021/22 half-year performance, further additional expenditures are anticipated which relate to significant government guarantee commitments made under the previous administration. These include the airport revenue guarantee expenditure of \$16 million and the costs for Morgan's Point/Caroline Bay estimated at \$5.3 million to fund the work of the joint provisional liquidators, buildings maintenance, lawyers and consultants. Other areas of proposed additional spend include Financial Assistance at \$1.25 million.

Mr. Speaker, in my Ministerial Statement on the 2021/22 half-year performance, I highlighted that it is imperative that the budget deficit target for fiscal 2021/22 is not exceeded given the current high levels of public debt. As I have noted on a number of occasions, a breach of the deficit target should be seen as a serious issue as it could have a potentially negative impact on the cost of refinancing government debt in the future and on Bermuda's credit rating.

Accordingly, current expenditure savings have already been identified by all ministries in the amount of approximately \$13 million to support the increase in expenditures. The majority of these savings is due to vacant positions throughout the government which have yet to be recruited. Steps are also being taken to ensure that overtime is further managed and limited to use in essential matters only. In addition, ministries continue to re-examine and reduce lower-priority budget expenditures to ensure the deficit target is achieved.

Mr. Speaker, having considered the increase in revenues, the unbudgeted expenditures and the already identified expenditure savings, it was recognised that there is also a need to consider the level of proposed capital expenditures to ensure that the original deficit target of \$124.7 million was achieved.

Capital Expenditures

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I will therefore now provide further detail in relation to capital investment. The original capital expenditure [capex] component of the 2021/22 budget was set at \$92.9 million. Capital expenditures continue to track below

the expected level, for an annual spend of \$92.9 million for fiscal 2021/22. This decrease was mainly due to the continued impact of COVID-19 on the availability of resources required to deliver on capital projects. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance is proposing a \$25 million reduction in capital expenditures for this fiscal year. This would revise the estimate for capex down to \$67.8 million for 2021/22, an expenditure level which is in line with actual capital spending in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 fiscal years.

Mr. Speaker, after factoring in both proposed current and capital expenditure savings, increases in revenue and the impact of work being done to further reprioritise spending, we remain confident that the budget deficit target of \$124.7 million can be achieved. It is important that we continue to ensure that fiscal matters are managed in a prudent and considered way, and that we continue the fiscal discipline that is required for the achievement of a balanced budget in as timely a period as possible. In that regard, it is intended that the Government will continue its work to progress on the implementation of the government reform initiatives including rationalisation of all government departments, quangos and services.

Mr. Speaker, in closing we recognise that these are extremely challenging times not only for governments but also for individuals and businesses. We remain conscious of the continual need to provide appropriate support for our community while ensuring that we execute a financial and fiscal strategy that is credible and sustainable. As we continue our work to appropriately manage the fiscal affairs of this country, our focus remains on taking actions in a way that contributes to a bright future for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your paper?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes. Can you hear me, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. Continue.

ELECTRIC BUSES UPDATE

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in March of this year during the Budget debate I announced that as part of the Government's commitment to protecting the Island's environment, the Ministry of Transport is starting by purchasing 30 [electric buses](#). The buses were purchased

from Golden Dragon Bus Company Ltd. in China in August. Each bus cost [US]\$114,200. By comparison, the last diesel bus purchased from Portugal in 2018 cost [US]\$250,000. The company recently completed the pre-delivery inspections and is currently preparing the buses to be shipped from Shanghai to Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to announce that this project has progressed despite global supply chain issues. We anticipate that the buses will be arriving on three shipments over the next few months. But [I am] more [excited] because they are scheduled to go into service in April of 2022.

Mr. Speaker, an engineer from Golden Dragon Bus Company will be based in Bermuda for three months after the buses arrive to support with commissioning and training of the Public Transportation Department staff. Additionally, the department's technicians will participate in electric vehicle training online via the Institute for Motoring Industry, UK, and locally via the Bermuda College. The department is also recruiting additional bus operators to ensure that we have the resources required to provide a reliable and consistent public bus service. The job advertisement will run from 17 December through 31 December of this year.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the Government's economic recovery plan, we are in the process of constructing interim charging stations at Dockyard, St. George's and Fort Langton bus depots to support the initial 30 buses until the permanent charging infrastructure is ready. These charging stations will be fed from existing BELCO circuits and completed in March of 2022. The initial RFP [request for proposal] for the new electric buses envisioned transitioning the entire bus fleet to electric over 10 years. The permanent charging infrastructure will accommodate the whole fleet. There will be a total of 30 charging stations servicing 60 bus bays, a 450 kilovolt-amps rooftop solar PV array and a battery energy storage system at the Fort Langton bus depot. The RFP for this new infrastructure is concluding, and the contract award is anticipated early in the new year. The build will take one year to complete.

Mr. Speaker, although the RFP included buses with wheelchair access, the new buses are not wheelchair accessible. We have revisited feedback from the 2019 Transport Green Paper and consulted with relevant stakeholders, and we believe that a dedicated programme would better serve persons with motorised wheelchairs. The Ministry is currently working on a paratransit programme, and I will be sharing more on this initiative in February.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to remind commuters who use public buses and ferries to follow the Health Ministry's COVID-19 guidelines for travelling on public transportation—not only for their safety but also for the safety of the hard-working staff of the Department of Public Transportation and the Department of Marine and Ports Services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, can you see me?

The Speaker: I see you and hear you. Continue.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. Just having a few technical difficulties. Just waiting for the Statement to pop up on my screen. Okay, there it is.

The Speaker: Yes.

HISTORY AND LEGACY COMMITTEE

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise with my honourable colleagues and the community at large to talk about the work that will be undertaken for the establishment of a [History and Legacy Committee](#).

Mr. Speaker, many of us are walking on paths that have been tread for us by those who came before us—our parents, grandparents, educators, and political and community leaders, some of whom were groundbreakers and most of whom were average citizens. Their efforts to develop the Bermuda that we live in today have created opportunities for us to continue to improve Bermuda so that we can make our nation better and so that we can all thrive within our community. As we move forward with education reform, we know that change in education is not only desired but it is a prerequisite to designing the kind of public education system that inspires confidence and meets the educational, societal and other related needs of each and every learner.

Mr. Speaker, when important things are to be gained, like better education for each and every child, it is critical to keep in mind what we do not want to lose. These changes, which are the Government's response to community calls for change, have brought long-standing issues and concerns about Bermuda's educational history and legacy to the forefront. From lived experiences, discussions with our family members, concerns for our constituents and from prior debates in this House, we know that our country's history is a difficult and painful one, especially for those of our parents' and our grandparents' generations.

It is rich with examples of our great history of building and trades, seafaring and shipbuilding, and developing and shaping young minds and leaders. However, it is also a painful and difficult history of racial segregation, separate and unequal schools, and class stratification. Along with my predecessors, I rec-

ognise that decisions have been made in decades past that continue to have profound implications on current and former students of the Bermuda Public School System and Bermudian society. Many Members know about the vital history of schools such as the Bermuda Technical Institute, Howard Academy, Warwick Sec, Prospect School for Girls, the Robert Crawford and others that have closed or been repurposed in decades past.

Mr. Speaker, during the recent consultation on parish primary schools, I was reminded and reminded and reminded again about these critical issues and of the need to teach, learn, know, understand and appreciate our educational history and legacy. In addition to listening to and reading the numerous submissions from community members, I also received many messages of support and met directly with community members passionate about protecting and preserving the history and legacy of schools. Through this process, it has become evident that, despite very good intentions and the imperative to bring about change for young people, a response was needed that met the moment of change that we are undertaking.

Mr. Speaker, prior to making a single decision about parish primary schools, I resolved that these concerns had to be addressed. As I listened to and considered the concerns, mostly of elders with deep connections to particular schools and school communities, it was evident that while there have been significant contributions made to documenting and understanding Bermuda's educational history, more was and is needed. Therefore, I committed to establishing the History and Legacy Committee to engage with the community and to document, commemorate and preserve Bermuda's educational and school history and legacies.

Mr. Speaker, of course this effort could be easily misjudged as just another government committee being thrown at a problem. I can assure you and the Members of this Honourable House that this indeed is not that. This past summer I met directly with passionate and committed community members, including the adult children of renowned educators, current and former educators and parents of current students, many of whom were also public school alumni. I also met with the technical officers of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport; historians and researchers; and community and cultural leaders to share feedback from the parish primary consultation, to engage in deep discussions about the history and legacy of schools and education, and to obtain input on the development of the History and Legacy Committee. This assistance helped to shape the vision and design of the History and Legacy Committee.

Mr. Speaker, subsequently, I have initiated the work of the History and Legacy Committee with the appointment of the Chairperson, Ms. Heather Whalen. Ms. Whalen will steer and oversee the work of the History and Legacy Committee. She has been

working with members of the Ministry of Education team toward the formal establishment of this committee. The preparation work includes creating a small short-term working group [Working Group] to develop the terms of reference that the eventual Committee will use once it is fully established and constituted.

Mr. Speaker, the Working Group's membership consists of Ms. Heather Whalen, who is the retired Director of Community and Cultural Affairs. During her professional career she spearheaded a number of international events, served as the head of the delegation for CARIFESTA and was a member of the team organising the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. She is the co-author of Bermuda's first National Cultural Heritage Policy.

Well known to Members of the Legislature, Ms. Whalen has co-hosted several ceremonies for the Convening of the Legislature and has also served as a member of the committee to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Bermuda House of Assembly. In addition, she has previously served on several government committees and is a member of the Board of Education and the Interim Director of Age Concern. Ms. Whalen began her career in education, teaching history and civics at the Berkeley Institute where she also served as Head of the Social Studies Department.

Ms. Alberta Dyer-Tucker is retired from public service, having served in numerous roles including Assistant Cabinet Secretary [Policy] and Senior Education Officer for Early Education, among other roles. She was also one of Bermuda's inaugural policy analysts and later co-led the Cabinet Office's Intern Programme, which helped launch the careers of many young Bermudians. Immediately before her retirement, Ms. Dyer-Tucker helped organise a Commission of Inquiry, also serving as Commission Clerk. She later served as Clerk to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee Inquiring into the Events of December 2nd, 2016. She also briefly worked with the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda. She is also a former educator, having begun her career as a classroom teacher at Victor Scott Primary.

Mr. Adrian Lodge has worked in the IT industry for over 20 years. He has recently completed a Privacy Officer and Cybersecurity course with a passion for always learning and improving. Adrian is the founder of local software development company Supatone Ltd. He has led the BEDC's StartUp Weekend for entrepreneurs, has volunteered at the annual Hackathon and has taught WordPress. He also designs mobile apps and games for Bermuda Island Games, a local business he started to promote Bermudian culture digitally. Adrian holds a Master's Degree in Information Technology Management from the University of Liverpool.

Ms. Taneesha Ottley is a Ministry of Education Policy Analyst and will provide research and secretariat support for the Working Group. Having re-

viewed and analysed all of the submissions from the parish primary school consultation process, she has developed deep and broad insight into the issues raised by community members regarding the history and legacy of schools and education. She is also a public school alumna, having graduated from Cedar-Bridge Academy. She has obtained an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts from Bermuda College and a Bachelor's Degree in Social Policy from the University of Lincoln, UK. Ms. Ottley is currently studying towards a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Management from the University of York, UK.

Dr. Theodore Francis is an Assistant Professor of History at Huston-Tillotson University [HBCU], a historically Black college and university in Austin, Texas. He teaches African American, Caribbean and United States history courses. His research focuses on race, resistance and Black travel in the African Diaspora, particularly the Caribbean and Americas. In 2020 Dr. Francis served as an expert witness for the Bermuda Government's Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses. He completed an extensive research report on the Tucker's Town portion of these land losses. Dr. Francis is the co-author of *Prudent Rebels: Bermudians and the First Age of Revolution* with Dr. Clarence Maxwell and Alexandra Mairs-Kessler. His current book manuscript explores African American tourism to Bermuda during the Island's desegregation movement.

Mr. Randy Scott is a retired Parliamentary Registrar, having served in this leadership role for many years after working as the Assistant Parliamentary Registrar. After teaching for a period at the Robert Crawford School, Mr. Scott also worked in the Department of Statistics for more than 20 years. He is an alumnus of West End Primary School and attended Sandy's Secondary School, having completed his high school education in the United States at Eron Preparatory School in New York City. He attended Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in History Education.

Dr. Quito Swan is a Professor of African American and African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. The author of *Black Power in Bermuda* and the forthcoming *Pasifika Black: Oceania, Anticolonialism, and the African World*, his scholarship is focused on 20th century Black internationalism. In 2020 Dr. Swan served as an expert witness for the Bermuda Government's Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses. He submitted a report on the St. David's/US baselands section of these land grabs. He is the recipient of several awards including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute, the Wilson International Center for Scholars, Pennsylvania State University's Humanities Institute and Australia's University of Queensland. He is also the founder of DrinkWell, a professorial consulting agency.

Ms. Rhonda Woods-Smith is the Senior Manager of the Tourism Regulation and Policy Unit. She previously served as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism and as the Acting Director of Telecommunications. Ms. Woods-Smith has an extensive background in education. She began her career as a mathematics teacher at the Berkeley Institute, graduated to the position of Year Three Supervisor and culminated her career at the Berkeley in 2003 as Head of [the Mathematics Department]. Ms. Woods-Smith served as the Bermuda Education Strategic Team (BEST) Project Manager and was a member of the Hopkins Review Team led by Professor David Hopkins. She later served as the Chief Operations Officer for the Interim Executive Board of Education and the Board of Education, respectively, and is currently a member of the Board of Governors at the Berkeley Institute.

Mr. Speaker, the Working Group's membership consists of a breadth of academic, technical and practical knowledge and experience that is needed to plan and prepare for the work of the History and Legacy Committee. Under the direction of the History and Legacy Committee's Chairperson, the Working Group will accomplish the following:

- i. develop the terms of reference for the History and Legacy Committee;
- ii. identify the types of professional and community roles and skill sets necessary for the Committee;
- iii. identify potential work streams and supporting organisational structures and processes for the Committee project—for example, research, data collection, community engagement, communications, et cetera;
- iv. develop a provisional project plan outlining the milestones;
- v. make recommendations on the likely duration of the short- to medium-term phases of the History and Legacy Committee project;
- vi. make recommendations on the likely required time contribution of the History and Legacy Committee members for the project; and
- vii. complete and present the terms of reference by March 31, 2022.

This two-part process of creating a working group to support the introduction of a committee has worked well before. This approach was taken regarding the School Reorganisation [SCORE] Committee and allowed technical and community expertise from outside the Ministry of Education to be utilised to develop the groundwork for the larger body of work to be undertaken.

Mr. Speaker, following the development of the terms of reference and the completion of these other responsibilities, some or all of the members of the Working Group will transition into the Committee itself. Therefore, other members of our community will also have opportunities to serve on the History and Legacy

Committee once it is formally and fully established in early 2022. This Committee will use the terms of reference as a framework to guide and carry out longer-term work with the ultimate responsibility of documenting Bermuda's historical educational history and making recommendations on the best ways to preserve, honour and commemorate the history and legacy of education in Bermuda.

I want to extend thanks to the persons who have made contributions to the development of the History and Legacy Committee. The interest, passion and dedication of those committed to the documentation and celebration of our educational history will help with the necessary changes needed to the public education system and make our understanding of our past educational achievements much richer in the process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the final Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Labour.

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

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

IMMIGRATION REFORM AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise before this Honourable House to provide you with an update on the process improvements made within the Department of Immigration [the Department] under [immigration reform](#). I will speak on the following:

1. the process improvements made;
2. the automation project already underway; and
3. the vital policy role of the Board of Immigration, moving forward.

Process Improvements

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Immigration is several years into its efforts to re-engineer outdated processes and procedures. The Department has executed the following:

- In 2019 the Department partnered with international business and KPMG to engage in a lean process improvement exercise that led to a number of recommendations for quick wins to be implemented in the Department.
- Some quick wins included the adding of a new multi-purpose copier, scanner and printer; introduction of dual monitors for immigration work permit processing teams and the initial review of the work permit application form.

- The vetting process was targeted in a pilot and subsequent introduction of the bulk submission and application process, which resulted in thousands of pages of fewer documents and savings of hundreds of hours in processing time.

Mr. Speaker, these items were executed and further improvements continued in 2020 including the following: (1) Following the first shelter in place of the pandemic in 2020, the Department shifted to more efficient and cost-effective processes such as receipt of application fees online, issuance of documents via mail and registered mail for sensitive documents; (2) Documenting and revamping of the workflows for all major application types helped to identify common challenges and opportunities; (3) Rearrangement of the teams to the new streamlined process within the Department increased resilience within the teams and reduced reliance on any one individual; (4) Cross-training of various teams occurred; (5) the Department revamped its landing page on the government portal to allow customers to more easily obtain vital information, application forms and application fee rates; (6) A new telephone system was introduced within the Department in 2021 to allow individuals to have direct lines and voicemail, and to improve the robustness of the telephone infrastructure.

Automation of Immigration Forms

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, significant progress was made between 2019 and 2020; however, with all of the process improvements made, the pandemic demonstrated to the Department the critical importance of having strong web-based IT systems that would allow the Department work to carry on even if staff were out of office. Unfortunately, the legacy systems of the Department lacked this core functionality, and with staff out of office for significant periods of time, the gains made through process improvements led to rising frustration as few staff were in the office to produce the work.

Consequently, the Department has turned its efforts to aggressively advancing automation. In the Speech from the Throne of November 2021, the Government undertook to digitise the immigration application process. This work originally commenced in November 2020, and in early 2021 the Department had selected Microsoft Dynamics as its chosen platform to implement an end-to-end application and processing system.

Mr. Speaker, the objective of the automation project is to transition as much as possible away from paper-based processes to an end-to-end electronic solution. The scope of the project in this phase includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. electronic submission of applications;
- ii. electronic payment of application fees via a payment gateway;

- iii. electronic workflow;
- iv. electronic vetting and validation;
- v. automated electronic status updates and limited ability to log-in and obtain status updates;
- vi. electronic approval by the Minister or Immigration senior leadership;
- vii. electronic production and distribution of final immigration documents; and
- viii. the Department's ability to report on all activity within the system.

The digitisation of application processing, workflows and document production is a costly and complex process. The Department is implementing the project in phases to allow it to rapidly develop and launch basic functionality first, and then over time in an iterative manner to release additional functionality. Substantial work is still yet to be undertaken in reviewing other immigration systems and making the appropriate enhancements. It must be stressed that the functionality in these early phases will be basic and that the Department will release enhancements over time.

Board of Immigration

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, from 2018 to date the Minister's role has been unchanged from prior periods with respect to making decisions on all [immigration] application types. When the Ministry of Labour was established in June 2020, the practice of the Minister approving or rejecting applications was continued as had been done in the past. Prior to 2020, the board's primary function, as delegated by the Minister, had been to review and consider work permit and other application types on behalf of the Minister.

For many businesses in Bermuda, the pandemic required them to think and do things differently. I was appointed as the Minister responsible for Immigration at a time when most private sector businesses and the government were struggling to do business. In addition to the workflow, personnel, technology and process changes already underway, the board's role was reviewed and the role of the Immigration Board was adjusted consistent with the Act to provide policy advice to the Minister. And the necessity to consider work permit applications was transferred from the board to the Minister responsible for Immigration.

This approach is in direct alignment with the work already being done on (a) immigration reform; (b) the process reengineering work underway; and (c) readjustments required due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the benefits of such change to the processing of work permits include (1) the ability to meet more frequently and for longer durations of time; (2) the ability to consider all applications without the need to defer them to the next meeting; (3) the direct privilege of the Minister to request additional information and for the request to be probed for clarity; (4) immediate and direct contact with Ber-

mudian applicants by the Department based on the Minister's desire to know applicants' experiences during the recruitment process; and (5) decisions are communicated to employers/representatives faster.

Mr. Speaker, a prerequisite of the Department's automation is that Immigration senior technical officers must become fully acclimated with presenting applications, making recommendations and interacting directly with the Minister. The re-engineered process has facilitated senior technical officers gaining this experience and skill set.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the legislation, in 2020, as the Minister responsible for Immigration I engaged the Immigration Board to provide policy comments, advice and recommendations on the review of the 2015 Work Permit Policy and the Government's Policy Paper for Long Term Residents. Moving forward, the Ministry seeks to better utilise the board by having it focus more on policy formulation and providing advice to the Minister. This is designed to enhance strategic decision-making and oversight on immigration strategic reform priorities.

Conclusion

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Immigration, like many other government departments, is under immense pressure to modernise its services through an increased use of technology. The investment in technology infrastructure and developing human resource capacity to utilise the new technology is critical to the government's enhancing the delivery of services that will benefit the people of Bermuda, our businesses and guests.

A new re-engineered model of operation is required for us to progress past our current state that admittedly is simply not good enough. While some in the community may be reluctant to accept these changes for various reasons, it should be made clear that we cannot continue operating in the same way and achieve results that meet our current and future needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none. We will now move on.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Just for clarification, the written questions that were on the agenda for last week to the Minister of Finance from the Opposition Leader were carried over. But the Minister is prepared to provide the answer to those today. So we are going to start with

the written questions from the last [meeting] before we move on to questions from today's Statements.

With that said, Opposition Leader, would you like to put your questions to the Minister of Finance from the last [session]? And all three have been indicated for an oral response.

**QUESTION 1: COST OF GOVERNMENT
CONTRACTS WITH KPMG, PWC, DELOITTE
LIMITED AND EY BERMUDA 2020-2021**

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

Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House the total amount paid by the Government individually to KPMG, PwC [PricewaterhouseCoopers], Deloitte and EY [Ernst & Young] Bermuda for the period commencing April 1, 2020 and ending October 31, 2021?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, Ernst and Young total is \$4,357,209. The Deloitte is \$240,274.90. The PwC, \$594,200. And for KPMG, \$880,132.22. For a total of \$6,071,816.12.

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

The Speaker: Have you got a supplementary question or—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. Supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Minister, with that total of approximately \$6 million, is it feasible that the Minister could have in effect set up a department to address special projects, given that we have paid out \$6 million?

We could have competent people in a special project area within government that can reduce these expenses.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Minister, approximately \$4.3 million of the \$6 million that were spent are related to the Morgan's Point project and the appointment by the courts of joint provisional liquidators [JPLs] in the name of E&Y. If the courts had directed the Government to set up a department to do this, I guess the Government would have looked at the propriety of doing that and staffing it appropriately if we had people to do that.

The courts appointed an independent body to service provisional liquidators, and more than 60-plus per cent on the amount spent on consultants is related to the court appointment of the JPLs.

The Speaker: Further supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. That is fine.

The Speaker: Okay. Would you like to move on to your third question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My second question.

The Speaker: Second question, rather. Yes.

**QUESTION 2: COST OF GOVERNMENT
CONTRACTS WITH KPMG, PWC, DELOITTE
LIMITED AND EY BERMUDA 2020-2021**

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House both the purpose and terms of engagement for each service agreement by company and by the engaging Ministry?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, let us start with, first is the Cabinet Office. There are four engagements.

The first relates to engagement with EY, who provided some work, analysis on the feasibility of attracting international companies in order to establish a technology hub in Bermuda. That contract had a value of \$70,000.

The second contract was one granted to PwC for \$276,000. And they were professional services rendered with respect to three projects. First was conducting an economic impact assessment on the one-year residency certificate policy proffered by the Government, another \$25,000 cost.

Second was to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a medical tourism facility in Bermuda. And the third was to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a vertical farming industry in Bermuda.

The third contract relates to the IDT [Information and Digital Technologies] Department. Again, the recipient is PwC, \$150,000 contract to perform an analysis of the information and architecture of government's portal, www.gov.bm. And the fourth, final one is professional services, KPMG, related to the post office. That contract had a value of approximately \$20,000.

The next Ministry is the Ministry of Finance, there were five different contracts, the first with Deloitte for \$234,809.90. This is a contract that has been in place for a number of years, and Deloitte provides administration and support services for the Bermuda tax information reporting portal. The second

is with EY Bermuda for the \$4.287 million related to Morgan's Point/Caroline Bay.

The third is PwC for a series of professional engagements. The first is for valuation of St. George's Bay that is part of the Caroline Bay project for the purposes of determining a carrying value on the government's financial statements in support of the request by the Auditor General. Second is the phase 1 development of an economic and cash flow model for the Government of Bermuda related to the development of the National Economic Recovery Plan.

The third was to do some work around the unemployment benefit application internal audit report where they were assessing and reviewing the protocols in place for the unemployment benefit programme. All told, that was for \$96,500.

The fourth one is for \$7,490, which is provision for secondment services to the Office of the Tax Commissioner in connection with the update of the payroll tax calculator Excel tool for fiscal 2021/22.

This is an annual assignment inasmuch as there were changes to the payroll tax calculations. And the work that is done is usually to validate the calculator that is used by lawyers to calculate taxes due the government are up to date and accurate.

And then the final one, the fifth one, [relates] to the Registrar of Companies [ROC], KPMG as the recipients, \$224,943.60, for a variety of engagements, three in particular. First, implementation of the Economic Substance Act; second, ROC fee structure review; the third, ROC fee structure review, phase 2.

The next Ministry is the Ministry of Health, KPMG the recipient, the amount of the contract \$131,250, professional services rendered for a universal health coverage roadmap.

The next Ministry is the Ministry of National Security. Bermuda Police Service is the department, and the firm being Deloitte, a contract value of \$5,465, professional services rendered in connection with a large tax investigation.

Final would be a non-ministry/department, the Office of the Auditor General, two contracts, the first with KPMG, value of \$496,437.22, professional services rendered in connection with various outsourced public authority audits. These would include the Bermuda Monetary Authority for 2019/20, the Bermuda Hospitals Board for 2018/19, Bermuda College for 2021, Office of the Auditor General for 2018, and one public sector accounting standards course.

The other piece of work was with PwC for \$71,000, professional services rendered in connection with various outsourced quango audits. This related to audits for the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority for the years 2019/20.

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

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Can the Minister confirm the details of the tendering process for these engagements?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information at hand. I would have to assume that these engagements go through the normal procurement process unless a waiver is granted by the Cabinet.

The Speaker: Supplementary, or are you okay?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplementary.

I would like to have an undertaking that [INAUDIBLE]—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Second supplemental. Go ahead.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: —information back to the House, please. Because to me it is—

The Speaker: Request to have that information brought back?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, please.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, if it is appropriate for me to share that information, we will then bring it back to the House of Assembly.

The Speaker: Okay. The Minister has taken an undertaking depending on whether it is appropriate to be heard publicly here, [and if so] it will be shared.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Because I think it is important that, because of the scale of these engagements, Bermudians who are professionals in this field, I want to show that they have had an opportunity to bid on these initiatives.

The Speaker: No problem. No problem.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is it for me.

The Speaker: That is it for your second question. Would you like to do your third question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will do my third question.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

**QUESTION 3: COST OF GOVERNMENT
CONTRACTS WITH KPMG, PWC, DELOITTE
LIMITED AND EY BERMUDA 2020-2021**

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Will the Honourable Minister please summarise for this Honourable House the details of the completed engagement by company and ministry for the said period, along with the engagements yet to be completed by company and ministry?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, with respect to completed work by ministry and firm, they are as follows:

- Cabinet Office, vendor being EY, project being the technology hub—EY has submitted their final report for review by a subcommittee. The review is due to take place in the coming weeks.
- With respect to PwC, there were four projects—one-year residency certificate, medical tourism initiative, vertical farming initiative and the analysis of the gov.bm portal. PwC has submitted their reports, and their contents are being considered by stakeholders for next steps. With respect to the one-year residency certificate (PwC), medical tourism, vertical farming, reports have been submitted. Data are being analysed by stakeholders and the process is ongoing. And with respect to the gov.bm portal, the work has been completed, and a roadmap has been developed for IDT to implement its recommendations.
- With respect to the Ministry of Finance, PwC, St. George's Bay accounting and valuation review, the provision of an accounting and valuation for the Caroline Bay project in connection with Consolidated Fund audit, that work has been completed, and is reflected on the government's balance sheet for the whopping guarantees the government had to honour. Now they are recognised on our balance sheet for the grand total of one dollar. Phase 1 of budget and economic cash flow models, that project has been completed as per the agreement. And the third project, the unemployment benefit application internal audit, PwC reviewed the unemployment benefit information technology controls and made recommendations for enhancement.
- With respect to KPMG, the update on the payroll tax calculator, the update was completed. The payroll tax calculators are in use.
- Implementation of the Economic Substance Act, KPMG built the questionnaire framework which supported the build of the economic

substance declaration system which is currently in use. In the ROC fee structure review, the revenue engagement is complete and provides the basis for the implementation of the corporate regulatory fee upon completion of appropriate public consultation.

- With respect to Health, the KPMG project, universal health care and coverage roadmap, the deliverables which informed the high-level three-year roadmap have been completed.

With respect to ongoing works by Ministry and firm, they are as follows:

- For the Cabinet Office, PwC has two projects, one being Bermuda 2030 initiative. The engagement pertains to an analysis of Bermuda's becoming compliant with the United Nations 17 sustainable goals by 2030. This work is not yet complete, with an expected completion date early 2022.
- The second is for the arbitration centre. The engagement pertains to research to validate the business need for an international arbitration and dispute resolution centre in Bermuda. Work is not yet complete, with an expected completion date in early 2022.
- The Ministry of Finance, EY, relating to the Caroline Bay and their appointment as joint provisional liquidators, they will continue their work until the court decides that the work needs to stop.
- Deloitte, the tax information portal for the Treaty Unit in the Ministry of Finance, they provide ongoing administration and support services for Bermuda's tax information and reporting portal.
- In the non-ministry departments, KPMG and audits of public authorities. Audits are both completed and ongoing for various public authorities there, the Office of the Auditor General.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes. I do have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: For those projects that have been completed, can the Minister give us a total of the value of the final invoices for such services completed for KPMG, PwC and EY?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I have provided the Opposition Leader with the individual pro-

jects and detail and the costing for such. I think he has within his gift now the information required to perform a sum exercise.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I take that. I will accept that.

The Speaker: You accept that?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Further supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No, that is it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Members, that brings us to a close of the written questions. We will now move on to the questions from this morning's Statements. The first question this morning is for the Statement by the Minister of Finance in regard to the report on the travel to the UK, Belgium and the US.

Minister of Finance, that question is from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: REPORT ON TRAVEL TO THE UK, BELGIUM AND USA

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

On page 2, the Minister indicated, "It was therefore agreed that the UK will work alongside Territory Governments to appropriately explore opportunities for infrastructure development, and assistance . . .," et cetera. When will this project actually start, what resources will be required from Bermuda, and who will lead the project?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am barely back from the UK and I think that the standing-up of the work on this initiative has not yet commenced. So I cannot provide an answer at this point as to who is going to work on it and when until we get a sense of the scope of the project and what the UK has in mind with respect to this initiative.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. I will accept that.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Or a new question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: My second question.

The Speaker: Second question. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: REPORT ON TRAVEL TO THE UK, BELGIUM AND USA

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister met with senior officials of the European Commission and the European Council. Can the Minister provide details on his discussions around the topic of the OECD tax harmonisation and the BEPS initiatives and how they are impacting Bermuda?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I shared with the EU officials Bermuda's position. And the sentiment that I conveyed was not dissimilar to a public statement or the submissions that I have made to the OECD during the process of the OECD's developing the framework that it is going to be introducing around global minimum tax. I would say that that work is still ongoing. I think they have missed a number of deadlines, and I think the deadline of November 30 has now been revised to some point late in January.

What I did convey is Bermuda's desire to do as we have always done—to be compliant in these global initiatives and to work with the EU and the OECD to ensure that we are doing so in terms of the implementation appropriately. We expressed concerns about unintended consequences and potential impact. And I thought it was particularly important that my submissions would also be read, but also [that I should] articulate the content of my submissions in my face-to-face interactions with officials. So, we spoke about the Bermuda insurance market. We spoke about the potential impact of this initiative. And our concerns were duly heard.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Yes, supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: On the issue of discussions with the EU Commission and Council, the Minister indicated that he met with Ms. Petkova of the EU [Code of] Conduct Group. My question to the Minister is, What action points, if any, were there as a result of that meeting that will provide us with further support as a cooperative jurisdiction under the EU Code of Conduct initiative?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. There was a lot to that. And I would have welcomed the Opposition Leader's providing a repeat of the question, please.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, could you just repeat it for the Minister?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. So you have met with Ms. Petkova. And you had discussions on the Council of the European Union and the Code of Conduct. And as a cooperative jurisdiction for tax purposes, were there any action points that arose from that meeting to support our position as a cooperative jurisdiction in regard to tax purposes under the EU list?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Well, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will know that Bermuda is currently on the whitelist as it relates to our economic substance regime. And that regime is consistently assessed by both the EU and the OECD. We continue to highlight to Madam Petkova that the objective of the economic substance regime, among other things, is to ensure that there is a level playing field among jurisdictions. And inasmuch as there are opportunities for us to point out that the Bermuda standard is higher than the global standard, [then] there should be an opportunity for the Code Group to make amendments to either lower the standard for us or to raise it for everybody else.

We happen to enjoy a very positive and constructive relationship with the Code Group. Technical officers in the ROC and other parts of government are in regular contact with technical officers at the Code Group. And I have met with Madam Petkova I think at least two or three times in the past, including this most recent trip. So, we enjoy a good relationship, and I think if anything we took away from the meeting is for us to keep doing more of the same that we are doing in terms of our compliance with the regime.

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

The Speaker: Supplementary?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: I missed that, Opposition Leader. Supplementary or further question?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: No. I am done, thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, the Opposition Leader was the only Member who had questions for you on that Statement. However, we will move on to your next Statement.

And on the next Statement, again, Opposition Leader, would you like to put your question to the Minister regarding the second Statement?

QUESTION 1: REVISED BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

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

On page 3 of his Statement, he spoke to the current account expenditures excluding the debt service. My question to you is, In regard to the debt ser-

vice and mitigating its increase, can the Minister confirm whether it is his intention to refinance any debt this year given the expected hike in interest rates in the market? So my question: Is he going to refinance so that we as a country can capitalise on the low interest rates before they appear to increase in the near future?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am uncertain that the Opposition Leader, when he said “this year,” is referring to this year—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The fiscal year.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: —so if it is this year, 2021, the answer is emphatically no.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Fiscal year, fiscal year.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: In terms of fiscal year, the Ministry of Finance has started engaging our investment banking partners in a discussion on strategies around the impending maturity of at least four tranches of debt. We have debt maturing in December of 2022, January or February of 2023, November of 2023 and I think January or February of 2024. So we have started having preliminary conversations with a keen eye on interest rates. And those discussions are in the early stage and we will have them in earnest at the turn of the new year. So, we are certainly keeping a keen eye on where rates are.

But I think it is really important to probably advise the House and people of Bermuda, in my preliminary conversations what I have been advised by our banking partners in this space is that our bonds continue to trade very well. And the spreads often on those bonds—the spreads in this case being the difference between the rate of the government’s bond in what they yield and the appropriate Treasury security—have continued to narrow. And the rationale being suggested by our investment banks is that they are a reflection of the government strategy with respect to managing the economy and its fiscal positions.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you very much for that answer.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The second question.

The Speaker: Second question. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: REVISED BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: On page 4, [the Honourable Minister] is talking about the additional expenditure for the Financial Assistance. Can the Minister provide the

total allotment for Financial Assistance to date, from March 31, 2021?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that number in front of me, but I certainly can revert with that figure.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Those are all of my questions on this [Statement], Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Minister, you have a further Member who would like to ask a question in regard to that Statement this morning. That is MP Pearman.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: REVISED BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

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

My first question also arises in relation to the same paragraph that the Honourable Opposition Leader took you to at page 3 of your Statement wherein you discuss the Current Account increase in expenses of [approximately] \$60 million. And you noted that it excluded debt service.

Are you able to give this Honourable House a figure as to what the debt service will be on an annualised basis? If you do not have the precise figure, can you give us an estimated figure, ballpark figure? Thank you.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: The projected debt service number is \$127.5 million. (It is etched in my brain.)

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you. Etched—tattooed on your arm, Minister, perhaps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No supplementary. I do have a second question.

The Speaker: Put your second question.

QUESTION 2: REVISED BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, at page 5 of your Statement where you are dealing with current expenditure savings in the second paragraph you state that “current expenditure savings have already been identified . . . in the amount of approximately \$13 million . . .” In view of the [approximately] \$60 million increase in current expenditure, is the \$13 million already identified as totality of the savings you would wish to see? Or

will you see that \$13 million in savings go up further, do you think?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated in my Statement that I see the gap being closed by two or three different items. One is the incremental revenue, others being reductions in Current Account expenditure and capital expenditure.

So, in totality the increase in revenue coupled with the reductions in Current Account expenditure and capital expenditure could be enough to get us to the place where we meet our deficit target.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Minister, you have seen the current expenditure savings of \$13 million and the capital expenditure savings closing the gap. Does that mean that there will not be any further savings above and beyond the \$13 million of current expenditure savings?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: It does not. What we have done so far is we have identified savings at this point in time with a clear guidance to public officers that the opportunity to identify savings continues until we get through the fiscal year.

As a general matter, I think that we should always be looking for ways to sharpen our pencil and do things better. And inasmuch as there are great opportunities for savings, then we should maximise it.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, where you explain the current expenditure savings that we have just been discussing, you say the majority of these savings are due to vacant positions throughout the government which have yet to be recruited. Is that to be understood as a hiring freeze or just a nudge?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: A hiring freeze . . . I am sorry; I missed the last piece.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Is it a hiring freeze as a positive mandate that they are not going to recruit into vacant positions? Or is it just encouragement on your part?

The Speaker: Did you get that?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I did get it . . .

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am sorry. I will put it again.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: No, I got it. It is a hiring freeze.

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

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you, MP Pearman.

Minister of Finance, there are no further [questions] for you this morning.

The next is the Minister of [Transport]. Actually, I overlooked one of the MPs who had a question for the Premier. I will put that one question and then come back to Transport.

MP Caesar. Yes, MP Caesar, did you still want to put your question to the Premier?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: We will move on then. If she comes back, we will have to come back here.

Minister of Transport, you have a question this morning as well from MP Jackson.

MP Jackson, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: ELECTRIC BUSES UPDATE

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

My question is referring to the third paragraph from the bottom. The first sentence says, "The initial RFP for the new electric buses envisioned transitioning the entire bus fleet to electric over 10 years." So my question to the Minister is, Does this mean that we are in a 10-year contract with Golden Dragon for the entire fleet?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Thank you for that question.

No, that does not mean we are in a 10-year contract. What we are in, this is no different than purchasing a car, like the average person purchasing a car. Your contract is with the dealer until you drive it off of the lot, and then after you drive it off of the lot you rely on the warranty. So this is for the purchase of these 30 buses, and then any future purchases, even if it is with Golden Dragon, will be a separate contract.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: No. I do not have any additional supplementaries.

The Speaker: Okay. No further questions.

Minister, that was the only question that were indicated for you at this time.

The next Statement that has questions would be for the Minister of Education.

Minister of Education, MP Jackson would like to put a question to you as well.

MP Jackson.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, and good morning, Minister.

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

QUESTION 1: HISTORY AND LEGACY COMMITTEE

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: First I would like to say that this is a welcome concept to pull together this committee, the Working Group and then the committee. So it is definitely a positive move.

But I just have a question around what you envisage the outcomes from the Working Group to be. And of course, I am referring to the Historical and Legacy Committee.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. Part of this was, one of the rationales behind this was it was identified—as I articulated in the Statement, it was identified that when talking about schools in Bermuda, lots of persons came out and were talking about the historical narrative and things that they had lived through and things that people had collected over the years. And what we recognise is there has not been any concentrated effort to document this in such a way that anyone who wanted to know what the historical legacy of education in Bermuda and how it came to be the way it is—it is virtually non-existent.

And I used the simple analogy in a lot of my meetings and said, *You know, this is good information we are hearing about a particular building and some of the nuances that persons would not know. But if a student wanted to do a report on a school, where are they going to get that information outside of their knowing someone who just happens to know it?* So part of this is not only to document the history, but how can we display it? How can it become a part of our curriculum; how can we preserve and present it in such a way that people for generations can see this is what happened—that *this is how it happened; this is why it happened; here are the persons who contributed to it; here are some of the factors of why it went the way it went and why it did not go the way it went*, and be able to do their own personal research?

Some of the things that came out of our conversations with the general public are things like monuments within parishes, renaming of schools, renaming of school rooms for famous educators, creating an actual location where persons can go and track the

history of education in Bermuda. We are talking about nearly a 160-year legacy that has barely scratched the surface. And so, what we end up with is a lot of anecdotal conversations around schooling in Bermuda, and why things are done the way they are done, and why buildings were erected the way they were erected, and why educators went one way versus another way—without any actual documented history on that.

So, because this is a project, because this was something that came up during the reform that we are doing now, but I also realised that for my own edification growing up—you hear people talking about Howard Academy.

I do not know anything about it. I come from the Devils Hole area. You hear people talk about Talbot School, Powell's. There have been lots of different things that have led to where we are in education now. And it does need its proper place in our society for persons to have an opportunity to go and look. And so putting together this committee—

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: You are on mute, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Oh.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Oh, there you are. You are back.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. So putting together this committee is a way of documenting that history. And why we chose the Working Group was, where do we start? How do we put together a framework of collecting it? What is the best way to collect, what is the best way to display, what is the way to preserve? So that is the purpose of the Working Group. And once they finish their work, the committee itself will then look at, how do we action those items and put them forward?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, just a quick supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: I know that this is just the beginning of what I hope will become a great national contribution. But whether we are looking at statues, websites, museums, whatever comes out of the Working Group, first, I am wondering whether we are looking at any kind of budget around what to give as the scope or guidelines for the committee from a budgetary perspective?

And also, I am just curious, if we are going to have committee members who are engaging at that level of depth whether there is going to be remuneration involved? And what kind of guidelines we would

put around that, or whether this will be a committee of all volunteers?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. And that is a very, very good question. The Working Group, we have looked within our existing budget and have found some funding for a level of remuneration. Personally, I do not think the amount that we have found is representative of the expertise that they are bringing. But because they recognise that this is such an important thing that needs to be moved forward, I suspect that a lot of their time will be considered volunteer time in this instance.

Going past the Working Group stage, which we anticipate, as I said, leads up to the end of March and going into the next fiscal year, we are looking to look more proactively within the confines of our budget and set aside funding to do the necessary work of the committee. However, part of the Working Group's mandate is to talk about things like that. What sort of costs will some of this stuff incur? We do not anticipate this being just a one-off thing. This is something that we, the Ministry, are looking at adding it into our programming as an ongoing process.

So this is something that initially there will be a huge amount of data collection up front, but once that is done as we move forward over the years, it is just a matter of collating those data and putting it out there.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Further supplementary or another question?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Nothing further this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, MP Jackson.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, MP.

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

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Okay. Minister of Labour, there is a question for you in regard to your Statement this morning. And that is from the Opposition Whip.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your question to the Minister at this point?

QUESTION 1: IMMIGRATION REFORM AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister. Good morning to my colleagues.

With respect to the matter raised by the Honourable Minister in his Statement on page 3, about the middle paragraph, where it says that “the Department had selected Microsoft Dynamics as its chosen platform to implement an end-to-end application and processing system” to improve the immigration processing in Bermuda.

Would the Honourable Minister please clarify who is going to be doing the work of actually designing the Microsoft Dynamics system that requires some significant customisation? Who has been contracted to undertake that work?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I know that IDT has been working with the Department of Immigration officers and the vendors for the Microsoft Dynamics system. Is the question, *Who is the vendor responsible?*

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. So my question was, Who would be undertaking the work? And I may have presumed it was a consultant. But the question is very much *Who?* So if it is IDT, then that is sufficient for my question, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And so for all of the Immigration digitisation and automation improvement work, IDT is the actual lead on the project.

The Speaker: Are you satisfied with that?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I am, Mr. Speaker.
Supplemental?

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: What is the anticipated cost for that work at this point?

Hon. Jason Hayward: That is somewhat of a difficult question to answer, Mr. Speaker. The total budget cost . . . as you would know, we are going to do these processes in phases. There are a number of applications that we are coordinating, and Government has its own resources that can assist us with the automation of application types.

In terms of having all of the systems harmonised so that they all can interact with one another, that is a more technical answer that needs to be provided.

So, I will endeavour to get that information and provide it to the Honourable Member.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Whip, are you comfortable with the response? The Minister indicated that he would have to get that information for you.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I am, Mr. Speaker.
Second question for the Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your second question.

QUESTION 2: IMMIGRATION REFORM AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Would the Honourable Minister be able to inform us what are the broad phases and timings he is anticipating for the project?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the automation of the majority of our application forms is slated for early January 2022. So, we want the majority of our application forms available online in January of next year.

In terms of the end-to-end processing, that is going to take a little bit more time. We are aiming for the next fiscal year for our end-to-end processing of the majority of application types.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No supplementary. Third question, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Third question, yes.

QUESTION 3: IMMIGRATION REFORM AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Given that the automation should reduce time on task, [as] one of the outcomes of the automation is to reduce time on task, how will the Minister's individually and personally reviewing every application make that process better? Will it not confuse the process, slow the process down?

Hon. Jason Hayward: No.

What we have to say is when we go into an automated process, the majority of the work is vetting and validating. That is undertaken by the department. Once you have automated processes, what you can do is process [work] on a more timely basis. Right now, with the paper-based process an officer or the Minister, or previously the board, would have a specific time period in which they would consider all applications. When you go to an automated process, you can process [them] on a daily basis as there is no need to transfer files. One would just have to log into the system and process or approve application types.

For the majority of the applications which may be . . . such as passports, which is the highest volume

of the applications we receive outside of work permits that do not require the Minister's approval. So some of the process requires administrative approval, others require approval from the Minister.

So the Minister does not process 100 per cent of the applications received by the Department.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Supplemental, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Honourable Minister. So to be clear, we are not anticipating a bottleneck of work permit applications with the Minister individually reviewing them? Is that correct?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Certainly not. What we want to do is, we have identified that there is a problem with the way in which we are processing now. Number one, we need proper IT systems; but number two, if we fail to have the appropriate human resources, that creates a bottleneck. So, if we remove the level of human resource required to process application types—and a lot of that quality assurance, vetting and validation are done electronically—certainly we would have data turnaround times across the board for application types, in particular work permits.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Minister. I have no further questions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, that is the only Member who had questions for you this morning.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary someone had in reference to the Minister of Labour?

Hon. Jason Hayward: I actually have an answer to a question that was previously asked.

The Speaker: Oh, oh, sorry. I missed your voice. Sorry about that, Minister.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Go ahead. Put your answer.

Hon. Jason Hayward: To assist this IDT we did have a business analyst, who was Maurice Salkey, who assisted with the automation and digitisation process and the reengineering process.

The original capital budget for the project was \$80,000. The revised budget is yet to be determined for the next fiscal period. But it is assumed that that will increase, and we will revert back with that figure when we present the budget for the 2022/23 fiscal period, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Whip, are you fine with that?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. I thank the Honourable Minister for the clarification and the information. No supplemental comments now. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay.

For the Premier, the question the Premier had—MP Caesar?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: MP Swan. You also indicated you had a question. Put your question.

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But my question was for the Premier's Question Period. Is this the appropriate time to ask that? Not on his Statement.

The Speaker: There is no Premier's Questions today.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: There is no Premier—

The Speaker: No. No Premier's Questions today. So if it is not in reference to the Statement, we can move on. Thank you.

MP Famous, you have indicated to me that you had a question as well?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: I think he was confused, and that Members thought there were Premier's Questions. No, there are no Premier's Questions. And we will just bring this to a close.

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

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. And so my question was to the Premier, but—

The Speaker: Well, everybody is moving slow. I have asked a few times back and forth about Members' putting questions to the Premier.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I have actually moved on now. I have actually moved on. Everybody was dragging their feet on this for some reason this morning.

We are moving on now to the next item on the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member wish to speak to that?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Tyrrell. Is that MP Tyrrell?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Yes. I am trying to get the video on.

The Speaker: Okay. MP Tyrrell, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not need three minutes.

But I ask that the House send [condolences] to the family of the late Mr. Sylvan Deveau Richards, Sr., a former constituent of mine who passed recently.

An Hon. Member: Associate.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I certainly wish to send special condolences to his wife of long standing, Dorothy; and his children, Sylvan, Jr., whom we all know, Sherry and Sandra. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Associate yourself because I have actually done . . . no, no, no. It was not done last week. I am sorry. Yes, you are fresh; no problem. (I was listening to the other House this week when they did it.)

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you.

The Speaker: That is it for you, MP? Okay.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution?

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

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

The Speaker: Ladies first. I am going to say MP Foggo.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: That is fine.

The Speaker: MP Foggo, was it your voice I heard first?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, it was my voice, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: I know the Opposition Leader is a gentleman, so he will allow you to go before him. How is that? You have your three minutes.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, and I thank him. Let me thank him up front. Thank you, Opposition Leader, for allowing me to go ahead of you. But I know it is the Speaker's eye or ear I must catch first.

I just want everybody to join me in congratulating young Ms. LeiLanni Nesbeth, a daughter of the soil from St. David's. Her team was crowned NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] champions in—we call it football; they call it soccer. And even she herself, a stellar performance by this young Bermudian through her efforts putting Bermuda on the map and in a big way on the international stage. LeiLanni is both an example of an athlete and a scholar. She has always, always performed extremely well academically.

And whether it was way back when, when she was younger on the cricket pitch, she has concentrated all of her efforts in football. And the sport has in return treated her very well because she has been able to secure scholarships for her schools because she is Bermudian and for her country. She has said *thank you* by doing extremely well. And she is the first Bermudian to be the recipient of the awards that she has received from the NCAA and the ACC [Atlantic Coast Conference] (I think it is called).

Again, I want to associate everybody with these accolades and with these congratulatory remarks. I do hope that the House sees it fit to ensure that [LeiLanni Nesbeth] receives a letter of congratulations. Well done to LeiLanni, and indeed her family who have supported her every step of the way! Again, she is a daughter from the soil of St. David's.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Opposition Leader, would you like to have your three minutes now?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I will, thank you.

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the comments made in regard

to Sylvan “Tech” Richards. Mr. Richards has been a close family friend of mine and my family’s since I was a boy. In fact, I remember, Mr. Speaker, the two families, the Richards family and my family, getting together in the back of my father’s car, and we rode to Sunday picnics, the four of us. At the time it was Sherry, Sylvan, my brother and I, and my parents. And that is my first memory of them.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, when I was sworn in as Minister, Sylvan Richards, Jr., was also sworn in. And my father was there, and Mr. Richards was there. And he pulled my father and me over, and he said, *Cap, look at our boys, they are Ministers*. He was so proud of Sylvan’s appointment for that, and even mine to a lesser extent because we had been connected as friends for life.

Mr. Richards was a wise and articulate family man. Like most Bermudians, we have our challenges and, you know, he was not a perfect person. But he was a kind person. I think on the professional side and his contributions to Bermuda, the best way to categorise him was a master electrician and a mentor to many, many electricians and contractors whom we have in this country today.

Mr. Speaker, he started his apprenticeship in Dockyard, and he was very, very successful in whatever fields that he worked in with regard to construction work and electrical services. Some of the notable projects that he addressed were the Sonesta Beach Hotel and he worked on the US base for 60 years. He actually helped—he was superintendent for the electrical work when the Bermuda College was built. And he was basically responsible for implementing the initial electrical systems at Bermuda’s airport on the airline runway. So he was respected by the community and a mentor to many, many electricians and contractors. He will be sorely missed for his wisdom, his warmth and his humour.

Mr. Speaker, so I would like to send condolences out. In fact, I would like on behalf of the House to send condolences out to Tech’s family, Dorothy, Sylvan, Sherry, Sandra, Brendan and Dean. He will be sorely missed by his immediate family, and he will be sorely missed by our family and the rest of the community. So, [INAUDIBLE] to the family, and thank you.

The Speaker: Those are your three minutes. Thank you for your contribution.

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

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister of Education, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences to Sylvan Richards, our former Member of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with the comments for LeiLanni. I actually did watch that game. I am very familiar with Florida State in Tallahassee Florida. I attended university in Tallahassee, Florida, and still have many friends at both Florida State and Florida A&M. So, I was tuned in, and it was a thrilling final where they won 4:3 on penalties. But congratulations to that young lady, for sure.

I am staying with sport, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if this was announced last time. But congratulations to Kamau Leverock and Delray Rawlins for being selected to play in this US Open T20 cricket competition that is happening in Florida now. They impressed with their play in Bermuda’s tournament earlier this year, and they have been selected as part of this all-star group that is playing in this particular tournament.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send congratulations to all of the winners of the annual Dr. Reg Grundy annual Youth Photography competition. It is one of the pleasures I get every year (although it is only in its third year). So I have had the pleasure over the last three years of joining them as they reveal these photographs that are taken by our youngsters. They have three categories: middle schoolers, primary schoolers and essentially high schoolers. And the beauty of this competition, Mr. Speaker, is that the photographs have to be taken and sent in unaltered.

So, they have it split into three categories—Bermuda families, Bermuda buildings and Bermuda nature. Some of the pictures taken by these school-aged children are absolutely stunning. Any Member or anyone in the public listening, I urge you to go to the Bermuda National Museum’s website where all of the photographs that were submitted are able to be viewed. And you see the winners. I am happy to report that the winners are a good balance between public and private schools. As the years have gone on, I have been made aware that most of these pictures are taken by cell phone. So when you look at some of these pictures, you will be just astounded at the talent that is out there amongst our young people, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Simmons.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: How are you today, sir?

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I am fantastic. How are you?

The Speaker: Good. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, sir.

I rise today to pay tribute to my uncle, Richard [Canterbury] Simmons, who passed earlier this week. For those in the community who knew him, he was an elder for many years at the Radnor Road Christian Fellowship. He was a member of the Devonshire Branch of the Progressive Labour Party for many years. He was somebody who was very, very politically driven, spiritually driven. My father worked alongside him for many years in the Simmons Dental Lab in Back o' Town, where many people questioned, *Why would you set your business up there?* And they both believed that we should never be afraid to be with our people.

He played a great role in inspiring my father's running for Parliament. And he was very, very proud the day that I was elected. And he would often call with a word or phrase or a little encouragement that got me through. So, he will be well and truly missed. Condolences to his beloved wife, Gloria, and to his adopted daughter, Kimberley.

Mr. Speaker, while I have the microphone, I would also like to congratulate the Hon. Dr. Terrance Drew, the new Leader of the St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party. He has spent many years preparing for this role under the tutelage of one of the most brilliant political minds of the Caribbean. And I have no doubt that he will lead the St. Kitts and Nevis [Labour] Party with honour and integrity, and in the true value of the labour movement. Congratulations, Comrade, Dr. Terrance Drew!

And while I am on my feet, I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, one of the longest-serving Prime Ministers in St. Kitts history, the Hon. Dr. Denzil Douglas, whose retirement sparked the leadership run of Dr. Drew. And for those who remember Dr. Douglas, those in the Chamber when he came to visit us, he is a man of smaller stature, but powerful of mind, powerful of word and powerful of action. He has been very instrumental in transforming St. Kitts into one of the sterling islands of the Caribbean.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I take my seat and thank you for the time.

The Speaker: Thank you for your contribution.

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

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

The Speaker: Yes.

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

The Speaker: Yes, MP Swan?

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I bring sad condolences to the family of the late Mavis Ingemann, from Ferry Reach, a well-known East End family. Her son, Oluf, died recently, her late son now, Oluf Ingemann. [Condolences to] his widow, Barbara and certainly her daughter Cathy and her daughter, Mariea Pearman, and to their extended families throughout, and friends as well. I used to enjoy just visiting with Ms. Ingemann particularly in the Saturdays as we made our rounds around the community. Particularly over the last few years I got to know her a lot better. And she was of ailing health, and we pray that her family will be comforted at this time of bereavement.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulations offered to LeiLannie Nesbeth from St. David's and associate with Ms. Foggo's comments. And yes, I tell you, in my years this young lady ranks amongst the most talented of athletes I have ever laid eyes on. She came up to the golf course probably about seven, maybe ten years ago, and I said, *This young lady could be the greatest lady golfer in the world.* That is how good she [was]. When I watched her play golf, she was akin to the female version of a Kenny Leseur or anybody of that young age who was a child protégé. But at that time she was into cricket. And then she really turned her sights to football, went to England to play cricket! And I believe Brighton spotted her playing football. And the rest is history, as she went to Florida State and she is moving in that ACC [Championship] out there.

[No audio]

The Speaker: MP, you may have frozen there for a minute. I think we have lost you altogether, MP.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —this Honourable Chamber.

The Speaker: Okay. Okay. Thank you for your contribution.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: This is to the Richards family, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Okay. You have got 10 seconds left on your clock, but I think we have lost you. And I ask that we move on, okay? You are buffering out.

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

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Mr. Speaker, it is Anthony Richardson.

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

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you and the listening audience.

The Speaker: Good afternoon to you.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: I would like to give congratulations or birthday wishes, actually the first to the well-known Mr. Burley Burchall, who turned in his words *double digits*, 77. He is described as a great party supporter. He knows about knocking on the doorstep. He is principled, knowledgeable and dedicated. And what is amazing is that he is able to offer correction, and I have experience in this, without causing offence. He can offer correction without causing offence. So I just want to say again *Happy belated birthday!* to Mr. Burley Burchall, who is obviously also well known as a good [INAUDIBLE] and excellent coach.

Some Hon. Members: Associate.

The Speaker: Many of your Members would like to be associated.

An Hon. Member: Associate all.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: The second congratulatory remark, Mr. Speaker, with your permission I am going to read it because it is so important to me and so special.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: It is on behalf of Ms. Roseclaire Idonia McGowan, who is 95 years young, a Heritage Bay seasoned saint. Mr. Speaker, Ms. McGowan was born on December 2, 1926, to Mr. and Mrs. Ashleigh Smith, who themselves were born, raised and married in Tucker's Town, Bermuda. She is the seventh child of seventeen. Ms. McGowan was born and raised in the Heritage Bay area of Smith's where she spent most of her life and married Michael Edwin McGowan, Sr. Together they raised eight children. She is a proud mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She is an avid supporter of the great

Cleveland County Cricket Club, previously the Tucker's Town Cricket Club, as her uncle, brothers, sons, grandson and great-grandson have all played in the Eastern County Cricket Classic through the years. And she has been attending the ECCA games up until COVID-19 restrictions were put in place.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. McGowan keeps quite busy. She loves to watch international cricket on TV. She loves to go fishing in the Harrington Sound/Tucker's Town areas, following in her father's footsteps. She also loves to crochet and play Chinese checkers. She listens to the House of Assembly broadcast, enjoys listening to the interactive talk shows on 102.7 throughout the day, and especially the Glenn Blakeney show, along with the evening news and TV game shows. Mr. Speaker, Ms. McGowan is a devout Christian and loves the Lord. She still loves to joke around, be witty and have a good giggle. And to cap it all, Mr. Speaker, Ms. McGowan loves spending time with friends and family.

And so again, to Ms. McGowan, if you are listening in the listening audience, *Happy, happy belated birthday!*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

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

The Speaker: Yes, MP Dunkley.

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

The Speaker: You have your three minutes. Good morning.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to be associated starting out with the congratulations to young—

The Speaker: We hear you, but we do not see you. Okay, there you go.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: All right?

[I would like to be] associated with the congratulations to young Ms. Nesbeth on her fantastic achievement of winning that championship. I know they were close; I believe last year. So, it is great to finally get over that hurdle and win it all. It is a significant achievement, especially in sport, which is gaining by leaps and bounds in the United States at the present time. And I certainly reflect on the comments of MP Swan, her athletic prowess across the board, not only from football/soccer to cricket, but to golf as well. And I know that she is talented because I have played against her in cricket when she was a few years

younger, and I could see her all-around abilities. So, congratulations.

I would like to also be associated with the condolences to the family of Sylvan "Tech" Richards, Sr., on his passing. It could not have been expressed any more eloquently than the Opposition Leader, the Honourable Cole Simons, did. And I certainly during this period of grieving extend our best wishes and prayers to a former Minister and colleague of this House, the Honourable Sylvan Richards; to Sylvan [Sr.'s] two daughters, Sherry, who is a constituent of mine, and Sandra, on the passing of their beloved father.

I would like to also ask that the House send condolences to [the family of] Gertrude Eloise Bell from the Foothills area in Devonshire. She was a trailblazer in her own right in the fact that, as a registered nurse, she worked hard for years to provide emergency services, especially air ambulance services to people of Bermuda who wanted to go overseas. And she worked hard at it right through her career right up to the end. So condolences to her daughter and the rest of the family there in the Foothills area.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it has been done, but condolences to [the family of] Brian Hall, who was a trailblazer in his own right in the international business field. He passed away recently overseas where he had moved.

But I know many Members of the House are well aware of Mr. Hall's exploits in international business, and he will be missed.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to be associated with that, please.

The Speaker: Yes. Associate—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I will associate the Honourable Opposition Leader. I am sure all Members of the House would like to be associated.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I would like to be associated as well, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: All Members of the House, Mr. Speaker.

He will not only be missed by his family and friends, but certainly the international business community, whom he stayed in touch with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note I would also like to be associated with those who have spoken before me in respect of the passing of the father of our former colleague in the House, Sylvan Richards, Mr. Richards Sr.'s passing. I know that all of the Opposition and no doubt all of those in the whole House would wish to be associated and that condolences should be sent.

Mr. Speaker, today all around the world is International Human Rights Day. And it is International Human Rights Day because it is an observation of the first global enunciation of human rights by the United Nations when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. And while these giant global statements often go unquestioned by each and every one of us, the fact remains that human rights law as enunciated in the declaration is that which protects the individual against [INAUDIBLE]. And whilst we have [INAUDIBLE] form of democracy in Bermuda, it is not always the case elsewhere.

So, there will be celebration of Human Rights Day today at the City Hall. That is at one o'clock for those who are able to attend. All members of the public are invited.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

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

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I will not use the entire three minutes, but I have two specific things I would like to speak about today. The first is I want to wish a happy belated birthday to a resident or constituent of mine and a former Cabinet Minister of this House, Mr. Glenn Blakeney. Mr. Glenn Blakeney has certainly been influential in my time in politics and remains available and is an open ear as a mentor. So I appreciate him tremendously and want to wish him a very happy belated birthday.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I also just want to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Scott Barnes, another constituent of Pembroke West, on his recent achievement out in Las Vegas where he participated in a go-carting race, which is perhaps the most prestigious go-carting race in North America and actually had a podium finish. So here we have another athlete in Bermuda on the world stage doing a fantastic job. So, with that, I just want to end and congratulate him on a job well done.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? No other Member?

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

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

Hon. Renee Ming: Thank you so much. I am just trying to turn my camera on. Okay.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Renee Ming: There we go.

The Speaker: Yes. We still hear you. Okay, now we see you, yes.

Hon. Renee Ming: Okay.

I would like to give congratulations to the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service on their first inaugural Heroism Week. This week they honoured a family who had two young children, the Oduntan family. The children were instrumental in saving the life of their father. Mr. Speaker, they deserve to be commended, and I want to also commend the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service for coming up with a Community Hero Award, one that we can be proud of and also creates a foundation for things that we can build on.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to give a secondary congratulation to Natasha Trott. I gave congratulations to her a few weeks ago in this House for being the first Bermudian female assistant referee for a FIFA [Federation Internationale de Football Association] game. Since then, she has actually passed everything and qualified, and has been recommended to the FIFA list. This is definitely an accomplishment for Bermuda, and especially for Natasha because she is female referee. And we are hoping and praying that we see big things as she continues her career (or hopefully her career) in the referee arena. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

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

Any other Member?

No other Member. We will move on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are three Government Bills and one Opposition Bill to be introduced today.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, would you like to introduce your two Bills?

FIRST READING

INVESTMENT BUSINESS AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Investment Business Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Yes, and there is a second.

FIRST READING

PROCEEDS OF CRIME AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: And the Proceeds of Crime Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Transport, would you like to introduce your Bill?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

FIRST READING

MOTOR CAR INSURANCE (THIRD-PARTY RISKS) AND PUBLIC CARRIAGE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Motor Car Insurance (Third-Party Risks) and Public Carriage Amendment Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: Opposition, would you like to introduce your Bill?

FIRST READING

EQUALITY ACT 2021

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 28(1), I ask for leave to introduce the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Equality Act 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: That brings us to the Orders of the Day.

Honourable Members, it is now 12:27, and I am going to suggest that we break now for lunch and return at 2:00 pm.

Would the Premier or the Deputy Premier like to move us?

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

The House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:27 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. It is now 2:00 pm and we will resume the debate for today. The House is now reopened.

Members, when we closed [for lunch] we had just completed all the preliminary business for the day. We are about to start the Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The first item to be discussed or debated today is the consideration of the Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 2021 in the name of the Premier.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. E. David Burt: I hope you had an enjoyable lunch.

The Speaker: I took the time to get a little fresh air and take a walk around in the nice evening weather we have out there today. Because I—

Hon. E. David Burt: I was about to say the sun must have forgotten the message that it was winter.

The Speaker: Well, it looks like I might be stuck here for a little while today, for quite some time this evening with what is before us, I took advantage of it while I could get out.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that consideration be given to the draft order entitled the Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 2021 proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism in exercise of the power conferred by section 3(1a) in conjunction with section 5(1a) of the ¹Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue, Premier.

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (THE LOREN AT PINK BEACH) ORDER 2021

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

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 2021 now before this Honourable House is to enable the grant of tax relief for developers investing in the tourism product, The Loren at Pink Beach, Sardis Developments Limited which is in the national economic interest of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall the Tourism Investment Act 2017, which I will herein—

¹ As amended by the Tourism Investment Amendment Act 2019

after refer to as “the Act,” became operative in November of 2017. The primary objective of the Act is to make Bermuda more attractive to foreign investors and to incentivise and assist local tourism-related business owners to reinvest in their product. The Tourism Investment Act provides a scale of tax relief that can be accessed by developers through the grant of an Order approved by this House.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, The Loren at Pink Beach is located at 116 South Road, Tucker's Town, Smiths, on eight acres of coastal landscape formerly occupied by the Pink Beach Club. Sardis Developments Limited incorporated in Bermuda on February 14, 2014, and amalgamated with Pink Beach Hotel Limited on March 6, 2014. Sardis is controlled by C12 Capital Management, a privately held investment company founded in 2009 by Stephen King.

Mr. Speaker, The Loren at Pink Beach is a five-star—well, I should say, a 5.5 star, as the owners like to refer to it—luxury boutique hotel which includes 37 hotel suite/rooms, a restaurant, lounge, and a full spa. In addition to the 37 hotel suite/rooms, The Loren at Pink Beach offers guest accommodation at seven villas and a private residence. The residence sits on 5.5 acres of waterfront land and includes six bedrooms, eight en-suite bathrooms, and a two-bedroom staff cottage. Villas 1, 2, 3 and 7 each consist of a two-storey, four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bathroom villa with a pool and a detached garage. Villas 4, 5 and 6 each consist of a two-storey, three-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom villa with a plunge pool and a detached garage. All aspects of this development were completed in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, Sardis Developments Limited was granted a hotels concession order, the Hotels Concession (Pink Beach Hotel) Order in March 2015. The total value of concessions available to Pink Beach is \$7.59 million. As per this Order, Sardis is entitled to [the following relief]:

- full relief from customs duty until a year after the hotel's opening dates;
- full exemption from land tax for five years from the hotel's opening dates for an amount not exceeding \$105,977 in each year of assessment;
- full exemption from hotel occupancy tax for five years from the hotel's opening date for an amount equal to the sum expended by the hotel on marketing the hotel, redevelopment up to an amount not exceeding \$1,200,000 in the first year of assessment and up to an amount not exceeding \$1 million in the remaining four years of assessments; full exemption from hotel occupancy tax for five years from the hotel's opening date for an amount equal to the sum expended by the hotel on entertainment provided by Bermudian entertainers for an

amount not exceeding \$250,000 in each year of assessment; and

- full exemption from the employer's share of payroll tax for five years from the hotel's opening dates for an amount equal to the sum expended by the hotel on training Bermudian employees of a hotel for an amount not exceeding \$120,000 in each year of assessment.

Mr. Speaker, in November 2019 the Tourism Investment Act 2017 was amended so that it applied to specific hotel developments presently using a hotels concession order made under the [Hotels Concession Act 2000](#). On December 9, 2020, Sardis Developments Limited submitted an application for Tourism Investment Order for The Loren at Pink Beach. As previously stated, the Pink Beach Club was purchased in 2014 for \$14 million. To date, the total investment by Sardis Developments Limited has been \$79,323,160. In accordance with the definition of a new hotel as per the Tourism Investment Act 2017 this application meets the criteria for a new hotel.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite the attention of Honourable Members to an important caveat. The Tourism Investment Amendment Act requires tax relief already received by The Loren at Pink Beach pursuant to the Hotel Concessions Act to be taken into account. This is to ensure that the period for which tax relief is granted, pursuant to the Tourism Investment Act, does not exceed the relevant period, in this case, 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, in meeting the criteria for a new hotel the Act allows The Loren at Pink Beach to receive full exemption from hotel occupancy tax otherwise payable in respect for the hotel for a period of five years from the date that this Order comes into full operation, and full exemption from the employer's share of payroll tax otherwise payable in respect of a person being employed by the hotel for a period of five years from the date this Order comes into operation.

To qualify for this exemption the Minister responsible for Workforce Development shall, for the period for which the exemption is claimed, confirm in writing to the Minister responsible for Tourism annually that a management training programme for Bermudians is in operation at The Loren at Pink Beach.

Mr. Speaker, The Loren at Pink Beach states that it “takes pride in providing various training programmes to ensure employees are constantly learning the best practices and procedures to manage the daily responsibilities in a luxury property.” It is envisioned that between the years 2021 to 2025 the ratio of locals to international or guest workers employed at The Loren will be [a] 7:3 [ratio]. That is, 70 per cent locals and 30 per cent guest workers. As business is expected to recover, the company envisions a team of 110 staff members during this time period.

Training programmes focus on promoting individuals from line positions to middle management supervisory, as well as middle management supervisory to senior management positions. The training hierarchy includes individual development training, leadership development training and management development training. Training courses offered in management development include timekeeping and organisational skills, top-tier customer service, leadership training, train-the-trainer and luxury brand management.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is pleased to work with Sardis Developments Limited to ensure that our tourism product is constantly being refreshed so as to remain on the cutting edge of the hospitality industry. The Tourism Investment Act 2017 provides the means to this end.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

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

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

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

Again, like the Premier, I would like to thank Stephen King for his vision and his commitment to Bermuda, and his capital investments in the project and having a, as he says, *5.5-star hotel in Bermuda*. It falls in line with what we have tried to sell ourselves as a jurisdiction as and I think he needs to be applauded for his success. I have been to The Loren a number of times and during each occasion, be it birthday parties or just lunch and brunch, I have never been disappointed.

The Speaker: Mr. Opposition Leader, can I just remind you to put your camera back on? Thank you.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Is that better? Okay.

Just a few comments. Like I said, on our side we support the exemption and continued support from Government on this initiative, but we just have a few questions that I think are worth exploring.

I think the first question that comes to me is [about] the training programme. The Premier spoke quite a bit about the training programme, and I was listening intently to determine how many participants are actually in the training programme now, how many have come through and completed the training programme, and have they had any overseas exposure in the hotel hospitality industry? So, could he give us some concrete numbers on the number of participants graduated from the programme, who are currently in the programme and provide more meat on those

numbers? Because, I mean, it is fine to say we have all of these programmes and this is what we are going to do, but the rubber meets the road when we have Bermudians in the programme and developing.

The other issue that I would like to ask the Premier to address is the issue of when granting these concessions or tax relief and exemptions, I think it is worth the Government also securing information on the occupancy levels of these hotels for the period. You know, if the hotel has 100 per cent occupancy then you question the need for Government support, Government exemptions and Government tax relief. And so in my mind I would ask the Premier to provide more details, by year, of the occupancy levels for this hotel. If we are going to help them, there needs to be more transparency in that arena.

The other issue that I would like for the [Premier] to address is just strictly administrative. I see that a developer submitted the application for the extension of the exemption and tax relief on December 9, 2020. You know, I take the view that we need to be more responsive in this space [because it is] just over a year [since] the application was submitted. We are finally debating this Tourism Investment Order. Either I am missing something or we just need to improve the process so that we can be more responsive to our investors on a timely basis. So that was the first thing I noted when I read the legislation, that the application was made over a year ago, almost a year to the date, and we are just getting back to them after they have invested \$79.32 million in Bermuda. So, more efficiency is required in that space.

Mr. Speaker, with those few comments I think that is the extent of my . . . oh no. The final issue that I would like for the [Premier] to address is, can he quantify the total value of the exemptions and tax relief that this Tourism Investment Order is valued at? I mean, at the end of the day, we are supporting this hotel and this establishment, and we have granted them tax relief and we have granted them exemptions, but we have not seen the big picture as to what the total aggregate of the dollar value is, the economic value of these exemptions and tax relief.

And on that note, I close. And I close as I began: We in the Opposition support this Tourism Investment Order and wish Stephen King and the staff of The Loren all the very best in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

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

The Speaker: Yes, MP Swan.

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

The Speaker: You have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Hopefully I do not buffer this time.

I just want to lend my support to the timeliness of [INAUDIBLE] the Order. [INAUDIBLE] experience in this space. [INAUDIBLE] tourism industry, [INAUDIBLE]—

The Speaker: MP Swan, you are buffering in and out.

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

The Speaker: You are buffering in and out, so we are not catching every word you are saying. We are getting every other, every few words we are losing.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I am going to try to get closer to the server, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I will try it here.

Mr. Speaker, I will start again. I am in support of this Order as one who is a practitioner in this space, in the tourism industry. I have had nothing but great experience with those persons who would choose The Loren experience as the way to enjoy a Bermuda vacation.

I am just here to say that most recently, Mr. Speaker, I had a client who was there and I believe that the room was, like, \$1,500 a day, minimum, which may be even more. Maybe it is in the thousands. But it was not about what the dollar rate might have equated to someone like me, it was what they required for their comfort and for what they are accustomed to. And so, whether or not a person is going to pay \$100 a night for a room, or they are going to pay \$15,000, it is the value for money that they are looking for and it is the amenities and the service that they are looking to provide.

I am very pleased to hear the Premier bring this forward today because, indeed, in this space, that type of clientele will serve Bermuda very well. Because once persons get more and more familiar and see the type of commitment that The Loren is prepared to make, it makes it possible for others to follow suit as we are certainly seeing even more recently with the Ariel Sands, Michael Douglas, [Catherine] Zeta Jones. Persons of that nature certainly continue to show great support for this Island, such as The Loren.

And with that, I just want to say that whilst some might say, *Why has it taken too long?* I am here to say I am glad it is happening right now. And I believe there is much that can be catapulted from this positive initiative taking place at this particular time in our history. And let us not forget that! You know, a year ago, Mr. Speaker, this whole country was grap-

pled with COVID-19 to the likes that we have never seen before which would have made every wheel grind far slower than one would ever have imagined. And it is easy for persons to forget that this is the case and [is] the reality that we are living.

So The Loren investment at this time is timely and I look forward to other investments coming forward in this space.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Any other Member?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Dunkley.

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

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: As my honourable colleague, the Opposition Leader, said just a few moments ago, I support the comments of the Opposition and certainly support this Order as it comes through, and I thank the Government for having it come to Parliament today.

Obviously, with the overview that the Honourable Premier provided it is clear that Mr. King and his colleagues have made a significant investment in our country with over \$79 million invested today. And it is clear that their commitment has been one through very difficult times. This project first started underneath the OBA Government, and we are pleased to see that it has taken root. The property has been built. And now it is receiving visitors and locals through its gates on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should understand and respect that this is a success story during a very difficult period—the most difficult period being the recent times where we have been stricken by COVID-19. So I want to support the Premier and the Opposition Leader in thanking Mr. King for his commitment and, most importantly, for his confidence in Bermuda because clearly if you did not have confidence, you would not continue to want to invest. And he has made it clear that he wants to continue to invest in this property to bring all he can out of it, not only for his success, but for the success of the people of this country.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that The Loren experience has so far proven to be a good one for the visitors and locals. And as the Member who spoke just before me remarked on the room rates, I think it is clearly proven that if you offer a stunning site, which clearly The Loren is . . . even on the gloomy days

when the weather is not as nice it is still a stunning site sitting right on the ocean's edge down there in the former Pink Beach area. It is an awesome facility. It is the pool front, the waterfront, the actual main building itself. The suites offer spectacular views and large porches or patios for visitors to use at all times. I have been blessed to be there a few times, not so much recently through COVID-19, but they offer great service, and the staff are very, very good. So, the price point that they pick is certainly not stopping people from travelling to the Island to take in The Loren experience. They have proven that they can give good value for the money that people are paying out to stay down at The Loren.

So, I congratulate Mr. King and his team. I look forward to their continued investment in the Island. I have spoken to him recently about some of his plans going forward and he was keen to see this passed by the House of Assembly, so I thank the Honourable Premier as the Minister of Tourism for bringing it here today. I am looking forward to the project continuing to move forward and grow from there.

I would hope that others would see that a commitment in Bermuda can be a positive one even during tough times. Certainly Mr. King has stuck to it from the very beginning and now we see a property that I believe has won accolades all over the world for what it offers and what it presents to the people who come through the gates down there in the Pink Beach area. So, I am pleased that Parliament seems to be generally fully supporting this. And I look forward to continued investment and just as importantly, continued training in the facility.

Mr. Speaker, I think we, all of us who have been in politics for a few years, realise now that one of the key challenges that hotel properties have—once they get over the investment challenges and the construction challenges they might face, and then opening the doors—one of the key challenges is finding the experienced staff in a myriad of areas that can come in and do the job seven days a week. Because that is what is required in the hotel industry. So I am pleased to see the commitment there, and I hope that the Government will continue to work with Mr. King and others in the industry, such as St. Regis, to ensure that their ability to train and their desire to train and the plans that they have to train staff can be fruitful.

So, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to see that a project that now has spanned two Governments has continued to move forward and this certainly puts Bermuda in a good light. So we look forward to hearing some good reports from that East End of the Island.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

Any other?

There are none.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Mr. Speaker. [It is] MP Richardson.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have the floor.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With your permission I would like to offer some general comments in terms of tourism in Bermuda and what this represents. Clearly, I am in support of the Government's position in terms of granting the additional concessions to the Pink Beach at The Loren. I think Members have already spoken to say that those of us who have had the opportunity to go and visit at The Loren have not been dissatisfied. They are known to provide very, very high-end service which everybody enjoys.

I would also offer, Mr. Speaker, that my comments are in the context of being the Government representative in the area because The Loren is in [constituency] 7. It also includes, of course, the Rosewood hotel and the Mid Ocean Club as high-end accommodations. And what is interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, is that . . . I did not know this, to be honest, until about last year (give or take), that many of the homes in the Tucker's Point area are actually offered as high-end Airbnb's. What this means is that in that whole constituency now there are many accommodations that are not inexpensive, but they are offered. And what has been interesting is that many of them are keeping busy.

So, my broad comments will also reflect the idea of value, actually value and perceived value, because that is what, in my opinion, gives persons the satisfaction of spending money. So as the Member who spoke just before me said (well, two persons before me), he said that the rates at The Loren might be considered to be high, but high of course is relative in terms of what you are getting for that rate. And as long as The Loren and others are able to continue to give actual or perceived value, there should not be any issues really in terms of them continuing to attract guests.

I will pause just to say also, Mr. Speaker, that we have to be mindful that good service does not equate to servitude in the sense that if Anthony is prepared to provide good service and to be paid for it or be remunerated for doing that, without persons being demeaning or otherwise, then that is service. And I want us all to think about the fact that we do have to, I wouldn't even say *raise our game*, but to go back a bit, because as we all know the one thing Bermuda is known for is a good and high quality of service in the person-to-person level.

I will reflect also that at one point working in the hotel industry was almost a rite of passage; it was the idea that during the summer holidays you worked

in the hotels. The hotels do not offer sociable hours (if you will), because you have to work early and work late, especially if you are working the dining room, but [in doing] so the value of interacting with the guests was very, very rich. The opportunity to be ambassadors for Bermuda in terms of when you were serving the guests they would ask you questions about what to do in Bermuda. You would have interchanges in terms of what did they do and make recommendations and in many respects that interaction caused them to have a greater connection to Bermuda, and in many cases caused them to come back time and time again. And sometimes we still have reports of persons who have been to Bermuda, let's say 20 or 30 times over their lifetime, and that is because of that rich interaction with Bermudians.

I also believe it is appropriate to say that many of the parliamentarians both here and in the other place benefit from the hospitality sector. Again, reflecting on the fact that Bermudians are actually experts in what they do when it comes to providing service. We also know, based upon a recent media report, that fellow Member MP Scott Simmons has been rewarded for his consistency and persistence in service and has been promoted at the Coral Beach. And many others also work in the industry and, if not directly in the industry, in those industries that are ancillary to the hospitality sector.

I note also that in the Order one of the conditions for The Loren is to ensure that there is effective management training. I want to take this opportunity to encourage Bermudians to avail themselves of the opportunity, especially if they are maybe a bit younger because, as I said earlier, sometimes the working hours are not sociable, but the benefits are there. And you cannot expect to enter the industry, for example in year one, and to be a senior manager in year two. It takes time and investment, and it may take five years or more. And it is definitely, again, a rewarding opportunity while you are younger. And I might add also that before you establish families and other ties, take advantage now because in this context The Loren must provide the training in order to continue to receive the concessions. So there is definitely a win-win opportunity.

Going back a bit, I guess, also is that Bermuda remains in the context of having substantial physical beauty and as a result we—and when I say “we” I mean the residents—almost take it for granted. But I know, and I am sure you do know also, Mr. Speaker, and others, that the first comments of many visitors is, *Wow! The water is so blue; the houses are so pretty because of the pastel colours and the white rooftops.* And so, yes, Bermuda is physically beautiful.

Many people sometimes make negative comments. But even our roads, for our standard, yes, they can be improved. There is no question about that. But persons still comment on how good the roadways are. The fact that the roadways are very

well kept in terms of the bushes and those sorts of things, the trash is almost non-existent in many cases. And so what I am trying to encourage now is for us to be more positive about what we see and not take things for granted. Because for those of us who are often in the presence of visitors, these are the comments that we hear from them and that can be exemplified.

Mr. Speaker, a recent quote has been that good service must be more than the absence of complaints, but rather the presence of compliments. I will say that again. *Good service must be more than the absence of complaints, but rather the presence of compliments.* As an example, the Marriott, I believe are well known for speaking to you by name if you are a repeat visitor. However, because they are now known for that, they must even raise their bar and do more because people are just going to expect that. And so, again, going back to my recent quote, it is not about complaints, it is more about the wow factor, exceeding expectations, and in that context trying to ensure that you are able to anticipate visitor's needs before they actually speak them. Which may sound kind of difficult, but as we get more and more into this . . . and this is where places like The Loren come to the fore because they are able to anticipate what guests would like, what guests would need and therefore you get the wow factor and you do not mind paying what are the higher rates for hotel accommodation.

I want to also give a quick example of what happened recently. I do not know if it is appropriate to name the establishment, but I will do that to say that there is an employee, her name is Ms. Felicia Scott, and she is a Fairmont Gold Manager at Hamilton Princess. There were some guests who were arriving and she was not sure of the exact time that they were going to be at the hotel. So she took the initiative and called ahead to find out what time they would be landing and therefore have a better [idea of] when they would get to the hotel because she wanted to make sure that she and her team were fully prepared for them to arrive. That is an example, Mr. Speaker, of going over and above. The guests themselves may not know that was what she did, but what they experienced was that immediate reception when they arrived because everything would have been in place. And that is another example of how we must go forth and exceed expectations.

I will say also, Mr. Speaker, that The Loren investment is actually amplified by several high-end residential developments that are taking place in Bermuda right now. And some, Mr. Speaker, may say that Bermuda has a significant downturn and some negative comments in the context of tourism, but the fact that The Loren has already made the investment, and the Premier has said that the total investment is about \$80 million, there are several high-end homes being developed also in that same area. If you drive toward The Loren, headed toward St. George's, for example,

you will see there are at least four high-end homes begin developed.

What that means is that people do have confidence in Bermuda going forward. Because if you build a house that is going to cost “X” million, you cannot turnaround and sell it the next day. Which means you must have some confidence in Bermuda’s economic future over the next five or 10 years to make that initial investment. And as others have said already, Mr. King, who is the owner of The Loren, would have had the same vision in terms of spending that much money. He needs, of course, to get a return on that, so, again, that speaks to the fact that there are those who have the means who have the confidence in Bermuda, and we need to continue to build on that.

When it comes to these developments, of course, Mr. Speaker, the economic impact is quite extensive. By way of note, it will impact most immediately the construction which includes all trades—plumbers, electricians (and the rest of them), architects to design the places, interior decorators, truckers, personal staff, taxis, limousines, restaurants, and leisure activities. And with that regard, I have been surprised to note (to be honest) that beyond golf, which everyone speaks to as being one of those quick leisure activities, is that tennis is actually very much high on a person’s agenda when they come to the Island. They want to book and play tennis. And sometimes I see that when they come with multiple tennis racquets, for example.

Medical services are also impacted. That was another one that was a surprise to me. But in previous debates persons have commented on how visitors to Bermuda have a positive impact on the hospital revenues. And I was surprised by that. But, again, it is good to see that even that does have an impact.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close [with] one more anecdote (if you will). One is to say that we know that now, almost worldwide I guess, as a result of COVID-19 and the inability to travel, we are now seeing what we want to call “intergenerational travel” in that you see people coming to the Island now where they have grandparents, the parents and younger children, [together] having a continued interest in Bermuda. And again, they benefit from what they see and what they perceive as a value.

But I will say this. I recently had an experience whereby a person had come to the Island, he was a personal assistant to another traveller and he wanted to arrange transportation. He told me that this person was used to high-end travel and wanted to experience a limousine service. So they got the limousine service and they paid for it, and he wasn’t totally happy with the service. And he told me, *Anthony, I am prepared to pay much more for the limousine service; however, those who provide the service must understand that we expect a certain level of dress code, the actual vehicle should be clean, the driver themselves should*

have a positive attitude and be punctual. And within those few parameters they are not price conscious; they are prepared to pay for it.

So, I will end where I started, which is to say that in the context of what The Loren has done, they have been successful. They do not charge low rates; they charge higher rates, which is all part of the process. But one of their successes is tied to the idea that the actual and perceived value of what you are getting in staying at The Loren meets what you need and, therefore, you do not walk away from there feeling, *Oh, wow, I have either spent too much or I have wasted my money.* So, for Bermuda, that is where we are.

We need to understand that we are not an expensive jurisdiction. But if people who come to the Island see, or perceive, rather, that the value in what they are getting is acceptable to the payment then we will be good to go. And so let’s all work together, number one, congratulate Mr. King. Congratulate the Government in this current Order, but to move forward with a positive perspective on the fact that Bermuda is good, can be better, and if the visitors to the Island do receive actual or perceived value, then we will be okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

Some Hon. Members: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, MP Simmons . . . Oh, Deputy Speaker!

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank Mr. King for having confidence in Bermuda, as we all know that Bermuda is a very expensive place to operate. But let me say, Mr. Speaker, that the Pink Beach property has always been a high-end property. Even before The Loren got there, they had one of the highest standards in Bermuda and they had that high standard with 98 per cent Bermudians working there. They had one of the highest Bermudian to foreign worker ratios, as most of the cottage colonies, Coral Beach and the rest of them. But I think Pink Beach is probably one of the highest. And the foreign staff was mainly in the kitchen and in the grounds. But even in the dining room at Pink Beach, the majority were Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, the Hotels Concession Act (and you would remember this) was introduced to Bermuda by, I believe it was David Allen back in 1999 or 2000,

and it has continued from there. And when it was first brought in it was a five-year extension, but we have increased it to 10 [years]. And I understand that because Bermuda has gotten even more expensive to operate in. Also, in that [Hotels] Concession Act was about training of Bermudians and also hiring Bermudian entertainers. I don't think that we have monitored that as well as we could have from the start. And I just would just ask that we monitor that, look at it again because it required not only management staff and the likes but also entertaining, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Opposition Leader asked about how much this would cost, and as our Premier said in his speech, this is worth about \$7.5 million over the life of the . . . as per the Order. So, Pink Beach is in a great area. In fact, it is just across from my Uncle Hedley's estate. That would be Cole's grandfather. But it is a wonderful property. It always has been. And it has always been an example to Bermudians and produced a lot of good Bermudians there as maître d's and heads of the housekeeping department and all of the other amenities.

At Pink Beach, their service there . . . they used to serve the guests breakfast in the room. And the room attendants, they were the ones who prepared the breakfast in the rooms. And they would go out . . . they weren't required to, but they would go out and pick flowers from the gardens and put them in the rooms. So, as I said, [it] has always been a high-standard property. And I am so glad that The Loren has come in and kept that high standard that Pink Beaches are well known for. And let's hope that one day we can have the same ratio of Bermudians as we had during the former owners, as high as 98 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for [allowing me to make] those brief remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to continue where the previous speaker left off. I think one of the things that was alluded to earlier by an earlier speaker that this was an [Act] that began in one administration and was carried on by ours. But there was a key difference that I think should not be lost to posterity. Under our Government we raised the percentage of Bermudian employment required to earn these exemptions and this relief, which I think is important because Bermudians at our best are phenomenal in this industry, world class. And I think that this was an important change that we as a Government felt was important to ensure that we provide incentives alongside relief for Bermudians to be

employed and to be in an industry that we are world class in at our best.

As the speaker before me, the Honourable Member, the Deputy Speaker of the House, said, we have to be vigilant on this. And I mean this with no disrespect to any of our hospitality partners, because I believe a good many of them do their best. But having worked in the industry, I am aware of the anomalies that occur. And so as part of the requirements of this relief, we must ensure that Bermudians are being hired, that Bermudians are being trained, that Bermudians are being promoted. And I would think it not robbery that there actually be an annual accounting of this reported to this House to ensure that not only is the Minister aware but the country is aware that they are keeping up to their commitments.

Mr. Speaker, I had quite a good time working with Mr. King during my time as the Tourism Minister. He is an innovator. He does not see Bermuda as a place for the nearly dead and the newlywed. He was constantly look at ways to innovate his product, innovate our country, find ways to tap into the fact that wealth and prosperity are no longer just old and white. It is becoming younger and more diverse, and they want to have fun. They want to do things. He gets that. And I think in that regard he is an important partner in our tourism future.

He has done some amazing things and has had some amazing events at his hotel. And I think that he is a voice worthy of being at the table and being heard. And I think that if we continue to be an attractive destination for investment, this is the type of people you want to get who are going to drive innovation, drive future tourism, and push us away from the reputation of the nearly dead and the newlywed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Caesar.

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Yes.

The Speaker: You have the floor.

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to open up with a quote by Mr. Tim Chester.

The Speaker: I want to remind you to turn your camera on.

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Sorry.

The Speaker: No problem.

Ms. Crystal Caesar: Okay, I think we have got it now. Yes. Okay.

The quote is, “The focus of entertaining is impressing others; the focus of true hospitality is serving others.”

I want to commend The Loren at this juncture for its commitment to training up Bermudians. And I want to also appeal to anyone, young and seasoned, who is interested in this particular industry because it is a mark of honour to serve. And as one of my previous colleagues indicated, service does not mean servitude.

It would be good for many of us to note—many young people and seasoned people—that the programmes that The Loren has highlighted offer a range from leadership to management training, development, organisational skills, customer service, train-the-trainer, and luxury brand management. Some of these we can use in our daily lives. And I think that what young people and not-so-young people will find is that in taking part in some of these training programmes at The Loren they potentially . . . it will spill over into their personal and social lives. So, I want to commend The Loren for being committed to Bermuda and Bermudians for giving people the opportunity to train in a very noble industry.

Again, I note that they are planning to train people not just for line work, but also for middle and upper management. And I think that someone could be hired there and see themselves eventually becoming, who knows, a GM [general manager] of a business, maybe there or maybe at some other property. But I was able to present this particular type of legislation, which was the Tourism Investment Act 2017, in another place. And I must say that I am happy to see that businesses are actually taking advantage of it because it does give the businesses an opportunity to grow their business and also shows us, the Bermudian public and the Government, that they are serious about investing in Bermuda and that we are serious in assisting them in making this happen.

Again, I wanted to appeal to those who may have thought that in the past, you know, *Tourism is dead. There isn't anything for me in this industry.* I must declare my interests; I do work for a hotel property. And I must say that there is a level of satisfaction in working in this type of industry on a daily basis that makes one proud of what they do. And as we know, Bermuda has been known in years past for having service people who were second to none. And The Loren is going to be offering that to a large sector of Bermudians, or a good sector of Bermudians, and hopefully we will see people progress and make themselves management material, because, again, service is a very noble industry.

I note that there are certain concessions that The Loren will be getting, and I would like to just make note of them yet again, or what they will be doing with some of these concessions. And what they are doing,

it is a five-star luxury boutique hotel. They are going to be adding a full spa . . . I'm sorry, it has a full spa but they are going to be making additions to all of their developments. It is a high-end property, but again, with high-end property comes high-end service, high-end training, and anybody would be well served to take advantage of the training programme that the Sardis Developments group is going to be offering.

It was formerly known as Pink Beach. It is now obviously The Loren. We know that it has become a staple in the current offerings for tourism in Bermuda. And it is very well known, not just locally, but also internationally. So, again, they have to be commended for continuing to make investment not just in Bermuda but also in Bermudians, helping people to grow in the hospitality industry and just grow as a whole individual.

As I mentioned earlier, I note that some of the training programmes are not just about hospitality, not just about service, it is about growing the whole person. I think that more people would be well served by considering hospitality or a hotel industry, a noble one. I do not think that we have given it as much esteem as [we did] in the past. But it definitely is an industry where you can go to work on a daily basis and know that you have done something to make someone's stay a pleasurable one. And it does not necessarily mean that it has to be a tourist. It could also be someone who stays locally. And you can take pride in knowing that on a daily basis you have met someone's needs. And it can have somewhat selfish motives in that one can feel that they are doing something good for someone else, which feels good to oneself.

But in all that to say, as I first mentioned, the focus of entertaining is impressing others; the focus of true hospitality is serving others. And with those brief remarks, I would like to just say that I fully support the Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 202[1] to go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Any other Member?

None.

Premier, would you like to wrap up?

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

I will endeavour to do so and will endeavour to answer the questions of which have been raised.

First of all, I would like to thank Honourable Members for their support. Certainly, one of the things that we have to recognise is that it is vital that for tourism to work in Bermuda we have to be appropriately positioned in the market. And whether it is properties such as The Loren, the new St. Regis Hotel, redevelopment is taking place at Azura, new ownership at

Cambridge Beaches with the intent to invest funds there, and the redevelopment to the Fairmont Southampton. There is a repositioning that is required for Bermuda tourism and properties such as this do assist.

I certainly take on board the questions and comments from Members, and I will do my best to answer those questions which have been put forward. One thing, Mr. Speaker, is that it is important to recognise that the Honourable Member for constituency 33, who was the Minister at the time when the Tourism Investment Act came into force, spoke most specifically about the differences between this particular Act and the Tourism Investment Act and the requirements under the Tourism Investment Act versus the requirements under the Hotels Concession Act. I think that it is important for us to understand that.

The Hotels Concession Act stated that training programmes were able to be put into place. And there was an amount of payroll tax concessions that were offered to offset any amount which was spent on training. But it was training in general. In the Tourism Investment Act, recognising the history in Bermuda of persons coming into the industry, Bermudians coming into the industry feeling that they cannot move up the industry and then exiting the industry, the Tourism Investment Act specifically speaks not only to general training, because general training is required, and also the fact that the Tourism Investment Act now requires 70 per cent Bermudian employment in these properties, which was not previously existing specifically in the Hotels Concession Act.

But what the Tourism Investment Act also requires, very specifically, is management training programmes which must be signed off and certified by the Minister responsible for Workforce Development on an annual basis for any property to be eligible for the tax concessions which exist. So, I just want to make sure that I give that context, because I think that it is important for persons to recognise.

The previous Hotels Concession Order did not require management training to take place. It offered a concession for the amounts of which were spent on training for staff. And those amounts had to be submitted as per the Act, audited financials, so that matters could be offset against.

Now in my brief, Mr. Speaker, I had spoken to the fact that the Hotels Concession Order for Pink Beach under the 2015 Order, the total amount of concessions that were eligible for the Pink Beach was \$7.59 million. Now it is important that I say "eligible" because remember the Hotels Concession Order offers basically a rebate or offers the ability for someone to write off expenses for money that is invested in marketing the jurisdiction, money that is invested in local entertainment or money that is invested in training.

So, for a hotel, I mean, The Loren at Pink Beach is not as large as the Hamilton Princess and

Beach Club and/or the St. Regis or even the Fairmont Southampton or other types of properties, Grotto Bay, et cetera. So, the amount of quantum of which is being spent on marketing may not be as high, but I am happy to give specific figures on the amounts for the four years that would be ending in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, as the year 2021 has not yet closed, so we would not have figures for 2021.

What I can say is that the total amount of concessions that have been awarded to the hotel property itself is in the amount of \$3,093,295. And that is the total amount of concessions that have been offered. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that this \$7.59 million figure is for amounts that are outside of customs duty. Customs duty cannot necessarily be quantified because it is an amount of money that is invested, whereas the other specific figures say a maximum of \$1.2 million for the first year and a million dollars on the subsequent years, et cetera, et cetera.

And on that basis are the total amounts that [are] specifically against that \$7.59 million figure which was the [maximum]. The amount of concessions to date is \$2,162,882. So, key point. And the amount of money that has been claimed back on customs duty is \$930,413, and that is direct to The Loren at Pink Beach. There certainly were some duty concessions on the construction side, but there was a complex exercise making sure that those were properly assigned to contractors, et cetera.

So, I just want to make sure that this point is made crystal clear, Mr. Speaker, for Honourable Members because it is certainly important that we understand how these particular items are structured.

So, though there is an allowance for \$7.59 million, if the hotel does not spend the maximum amount of money on marketing, the maximum amount of money on entertainment, the maximum amount of money on training, they do not get that concession. They have to demonstrate by audited financials that they have actually done so, under the old Act.

The new Order of which we are putting forward, of course, puts forward the specific issues regarding what persons must contribute and what must be paid. And so this particular Order itself of course, Mr. Speaker, gives the property the opportunity to have full exemption from hotel occupancy tax, otherwise payable in respect for a period of five years. And also full exemption from the employer's share of payroll tax. But what is important is that they do not get this unless they do have the sign-off from the Minister responsible for Workforce Development, that they do have a training programme in operation. And also, as the Honourable Member from constituency 33 said, maintaining the number of employees who are Bermudian at 70 per cent. And that is specified in the Act, which is different from what was specified previously.

So there are more protections and more, I guess I would say, incentives and requirements and necessity for persons who are making these hotels

[and seeking] these concessions, to ensure that they hire and train and develop Bermudians inside of the industry.

The Honourable Opposition Leader asked a number of questions. One of the questions he asked was for the number of persons who have been trained. I cannot speak to the specific number of persons who have been trained. I can endeavour to try to get that information. But what I can speak to is the amount of which has been claimed against the training concession for the years, and that is \$220,409.

There was also a question in regard to overseas training. The Loren of course that opened in Bermuda is the first Loren that opened worldwide. The service developments in C12 investments with Stephen King are building additional Loren properties throughout the world. And after those properties come into operation certainly there will be an opportunity for Bermudians who are working in The Loren in Bermuda to have cross training in other jurisdictions. But at this point in time that overseas training, unlike with the Fairmont or other places where there are overseas development opportunities that are given to hotels which are within the brand, that is not necessarily applicable at this time.

The next question which was asked by the Honourable Opposition Leader was the question in regard to hotel occupancy. Well, I can state very clearly to the Honourable Member that hotel occupancy for the last year and certainly this year is significantly reduced due to the impact of the pandemic. But I do understand the Honourable Opposition Leader's perspective. There was a question as if to say, you know, if the properties make a significant amount of money, should the concession not be able to be varied? There is the power to certainly vary the concession, and I would love to be in a position that hotels were in occupancy at that level. The fact is that we are not there yet and we do recognise that it is going to . . . the Government has not projected that until 2023 that we will return to tourism in a state that we had seen pre-pandemic.

There was a further question that was asked insofar as to the length of time that it has taken from application to where we are today. It kind of feeds into the previous question of which the Honourable Opposition Leader had asked. These things are examined because we are talking about future revenue from the Treasury. And future revenue from the Treasury is something that has to be gotten because the Government must continue to ensure that it funds its operations. So, requests are made, the officials within the Ministry staff who deal with tourism policy matters assess what has been submitted, and make sure that what is being asked for is appropriate. Those matters get vetted and discussed and also discussed with the Ministry of Finance before they are brought to the Cabinet for consideration for approval and drafting

instructions to go to the Attorney General's Chambers so these matters can be advanced.

What is important is that this matter is being concluded and will hopefully be approved by the Legislature today, by the House today in another place, and then the Order can go into place prior to the Hotels Concession Act expiring. But it is vital that we do our due diligence. And what is important is to know that there is regular engagement with hotel owners and officials who work on the Government side of tourism on a regular basis to make sure that we are keeping in touch with hotel owners, hotel managers to know what their needs are and that continued work and that continued engagement happen on a regular basis.

So, I do not consider it a question of delay. And I certainly do not consider it a question of responsiveness. But I think as we have heard from Honourable Members [what] is important [is] that we have to not only trust but verify what is being stated, [that they are] actual events, because we are dealing with future tax revenue from the public purse.

I think the fourth question I had written down here was the total value of concessions going forward over the term. The view of that is that the total value [of the concessions] would be, from hotel occupancy tax, \$2.5 million; from land tax \$600,000; and from payroll tax \$750,000 going forward.

Give me one second, Mr. Speaker, let me just . . . I read that from an email, but I want to make sure that I am giving proper and complete information to the House.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Just for clarity of what I have said, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the new Tourism Investment Order, this is part of what I spoke to previously when I said that these things come in, there are requests which may come in and the Government considers what is appropriate in the regard. Not all the full suites of concessions may be offered, not all the full lengths of concessions may be offered. It is done on what we believe is appropriate based upon what is submitted by developers in consultation with Ministry officials and the Minister of Finance.

So, it is important to note that this extension of the Tourism Investment Order from the Hotels Concession Order only provides relief from hotel occupancy tax, which will be payable, and also the employer's share of payroll tax that is available. So there is not a land tax portion for the new one, even though there was a land tax portion for the former Hotels Concession Order.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that I have answered all the questions. I appreciate Member's comments in regard to the fact that it is important to make sure that hotels are actually living up to their word. And inside of this particular piece of leg-

isolation, unlike previously, there is the requirement for the annual sign-off by the Minister who has responsibility for Workforce Development, that he is satisfied that there is an adequate training programme for management, [a] training programme for Bermudians in the hotel. And if that is not certified then the concessions which have been granted by this Order in this Honourable House will not be applied. And so, hotels do not have an obligation to do so, but if they want to access the concessions they must do so.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to that?

No objections.

The item has been approved and the appropriate message will be sent.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled the Tourism Investment (The Loren at Pink Beach) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

We will now move on to the second item on the Orders of the Day which is the consideration of the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) Order 2021 in the name of the Minister of Health.

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

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be given to the draft Order entitled the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) Order 2021 proposed to be made by the Minister of Health in exercise of the power conferred by section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

PUBLIC HEALTH (COVID-19) EMERGENCY EXTENSION (NO. 7) ORDER 2021

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable Chamber to consider the Order entitled [Public Health \(COVID-19\) Emergency Extension \(No. 7\) Order 2021](#).

Mr. Speaker, Members will be aware that the current Public Health Emergency Order is scheduled to lapse on 28 January 2022. The Emergency Orders, which have been in place since 30 June 2020, following the state of emergency put in place on 1 April 2020 were made pursuant to section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and declared that a public health emergency exists in Bermuda due to a communicable disease that poses a threat to the Island.

Mr. Speaker, we live on a very small Island, and as we all know from previous outbreaks the coronavirus that causes the disease COVID-19 spreads quickly and negatively impacts the whole community. We can slow the spread of the virus by following basic public health advice of wearing a mask to cover our nose and mouth, as well as physically distancing, practicing good hand hygiene and downloading the WeHealth Bermuda app. We can also avoid the three Cs of closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate in that the COVID-19 vaccine is available to any resident who wants it. As a reminder, this includes booster vaccines for all those who are 18 years of age and older, as well as for health care workers, essential and critical service workers, those with chronic conditions over the ages of 12 and pregnant women. To receive a booster, you must have had your second dose at least six months prior. To make an appointment for a first, second or booster jab, go to www.gov.bm.

As has been seen many times, vaccines save lives. The two-dose Pfizer vaccine has been shown to be 95 per cent effective in randomised trials. Even with the highly transmittable Delta variant, the vaccine's effectiveness remains high and early indications, Mr. Speaker, suggest that a booster jab of Pfizer provides a good defence against the newest variant of concern, Omicron. This means that as a fully vaccinated person you can still test positive and still contract COVID-19, but you are less likely to get seriously ill, less likely to end up in the hospital, and less likely to die. Our own data in Bermuda has shown this to be true.

Mr. Speaker, this does not mean that there is zero risk involved. Even if fully vaccinated, your own personal health is a key factor in determining whether you will get ill from COVID-19, and, if you do, whether you are predisposed to becoming ill enough to be hospitalised or die.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear we must all learn how to live with COVID-19 because it will be with us for a long time, both locally and globally. However—and I cannot say this too many times—success in dealing with COVID-19 requires a community effort. It is a community effort because this is one of the few situations where an individual's decision to adhere to public health measures or not impacts all of us. In this pandemic individual decisions can, and do, have Island-wide consequences.

This is not the same, Mr. Speaker, as choosing not to wear a helmet or choosing not to use your seatbelt where the person you are most likely to harm is yourself. Failure to follow public health measures has a far greater impact as the virus spreads quickly throughout our Island home, affecting families, schools, businesses and more.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health I consulted with the Chief Medical Officer and determined that a communicable disease of the first category, namely COVID-19, and its variants of concern continues to pose a severe threat to public health in Bermuda. To control and contain the spread of the infection, public health measures such as those provided for in regulations made pursuant to section 107B of the Public Health Act 1949 will continue to be relevant and necessary beyond 28 January 2022.

This Order before us now, Mr. Speaker, will extend the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Order 2021 made under section 107A of the Public Health Act 1949 and empower the Governor to continue the provision of the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Powers Regulation 2021, which imposed extraordinary measures necessary in the interest of public health to prevent, control and suppress COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 6) Order 2021 was made under the affirmative resolution procedure effective 29 November 2021 for 60 days, expiring on 28 January 2022 when the House is not in session. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage on globally, exacerbated by a new variant of concern, Omicron, which has reached Bermuda. We also know that a public health emergency will continue to exist on our Island beyond 28 January 2022.

Therefore, in accordance with section 107A(3) and (4) of the Public Health Act 1949, I bring the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) Order 2021 to this Honourable House to seek approval for the extension of the public health emergency for a further 30 days ending on 27 February 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution to this debate?

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

The Speaker: MP Dunkley, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And let me thank the Honourable Minister Wilson for the overview in regard to the Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) that we debate here this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, who would have predicted last summer that we would certainly still be so concerned about COVID-19 as we are at the present time? Certainly, who would have predicted two summers ago that we would be in this position? We have seen the ebb and flow of COVID-19 really strengthen its lock on our daily living and we have seen it loosened a bit with the number of different step-ups of the virus gripping our shores and the flare-up of positive cases over a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, I think, and quite frustrating, for many Bermudians to know that there are many variants now that have been identified as offshoots of COVID-19. When Delta became known throughout the world and certainly rocked the world, it took a grip on Bermuda, it was something that made us question the journey we have been on and what type of journey the next coming months would be. But we made it through Delta.

And then the latest variant, Omicron, came about and that sent waves of fear throughout the world certainly over the past week or 10 days as it has been identified and now more and more is being known about it. So the fact is that in the coming months, and perhaps years, it would be very likely that we will continue to face variants becoming known, having impact in our community and certainly forcing governments around the world to take action which they believe is in the best interests of the people who they serve.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very clear to all Members of this Honourable Chamber that these emergency Orders that have now been extended six times, with the seventh Order here, allow decisions to be made by Government and then action to be taken very quickly after those decisions have been made. And I think that is very important when we deal with a very real crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, we also must understand and respect that many people are certainly very worn out through this whole experience. Many people have had their lives changed drastically through this experience. Many people have lost loved ones through this experience and many people are now suffering to a great extent because of conditions that the pandemic has imposed by the restrictions enforced or because of changes to what has taken place in their lifestyle, whether it is not being able to work, whether it is being limited work, whether it is being locked at home, whether it has been mental health challenges, people are worn out and struggling and suffering, Mr. Speaker.

So, as Members of Parliament, we need to do all we can to understand and respect what people are going through and try to make the rest of this journey easier for the people in the country. And that is quite a difficult thing to do because everyone has experienced [and viewed] their life through this pandemic

[through] a different lens. But we have all been rocked by it in more than one way.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is also very difficult to do because over the coming months I do not think anybody has a crystal ball on where we are going to go, what things are going to look like. Even at Christmas-time, which is only two weeks away, or even by the end of January or the end of February, or as we come into next spring. And so we support this extension because we believe it is necessary to allow Government to be able to make decisions with proper consultation, to allow the Government to then take action quickly. That is what is required when you face a pandemic, especially one that seems to travel very quickly all over the world, Mr. Speaker.

However, what I would like to hear from the Honourable Minister of Health, as she gets the opportunity to wrap up at the end of this debate, is what does the Minister anticipate the next few months will look like? Now, that is not a loaded question, Mr. Speaker. But I think the people of Bermuda would appreciate having more of an understanding from the Minister of Health who is in constant contact with health officials and experts on a daily basis, about what they anticipate will take place.

We clearly knew that there would be more variants involved with COVID-19, so going forward, what type of restrictions does the Government think might be necessary over the next couple of months? We have been through the whole myriad of those restrictions, and currently we are in a better place than we have been for much of the past 20 months. But that does not mean that this situation cannot change. And certainly, we have seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, as we have gone through special periods in our yearly calendar, such as Cup Match, that we have seen a spike in COVID-19 cases because we have let our guard down. People have fallen back from the personal responsibility that we all need to take in dealing with COVID-19.

So, I look for the Honourable Minister to just share her personal view after listening to the health experts that she takes advice from, what should we expect through the Christmas period as far as restrictions are concerned? What should we expect as we get into January and February and the end of this extension Order, Mr. Speaker? I think it will help Bermudians along the journey of dealing with COVID-19 as we start to enter, as we get close to entering, the third year of it being upon us, because it was March in 2020 when it first started. So, we will be entering the third year in a couple of short months.

Now, I think we all understand the challenge that we face. We all understand how we can help make our lives easier through this by wearing masks, by proper social distancing, by good hand hygiene, by getting vaccinated, by avoiding large crowds and by keeping a very tight bubble in our family life, protecting ourselves and protecting other people. I think

Bermudians understand that. And the vast majority of Bermudians, Mr. Speaker, have done a good job of following all these guidelines and restrictions. Unfortunately, we have been let down by a small minority of people.

But I think Bermudians would get some better understanding and some comfort with a better idea of the critical thinking that Government is putting in place in extending this Order. Not that we just need it because something might happen, but we need it because this is what we see on the horizon, and we would like to be flexible. And we understand the dire need to be flexible and make decisions quickly during the public health emergency.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all Bermudians to not let their guard down. We have had a very difficult 20 months, 22 months, moving through this pandemic. Christmas offers the spirit of hope and faith, and that is something that I think many Bermudians will be looking forward to. But it also provides the opportunity for us to let our guard down and fall back again in this battle against COVID-19. And we cannot do that!

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge everyone just to keep your guard up. To do the best that you can, keep your bubbles as small as you can. Protect yourselves and protect other people and we can continue to see small steps as we get back to a more normal way of life and a way of life that is more comfortable for all of us. We are not out of the woods yet. We still have a bit of a journey to go. But if we continue to be realistic about the challenges we face, if we continue to understand the critical need to follow all of the restrictions that are imposed and to the good practices that have been successful through this virus, I think we can get there.

If Government continues to communicate and give [an outlook] to the people who we serve on what is the best way forward and what we expect, I think it would help this journey a little bit for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes.

The Speaker: Mr. Famous, you may have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am to the east of you today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right, sir.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I found the comments of the previous speaker on this floor interesting because I can remember clearly just about a month ago there were chimes to (what is the word I want to use?) loosen up restrictions, stop being so rigid. And in that time period, Mr. Speaker, the world has seen rising COVID-19 numbers in European nations. We have seen a new variant. And now we see new restrictions.

A month ago, Mr. Speaker, one could get a test 72 hours in advance, and then get on a plane and go to America. A month before that, one did not even have to be vaccinated. Now, in order to get into America, you have to (a) be fully vaccinated and (b) you have to take a test within 24 hours before you get there. So, the point is that regulations are fluid, and they are there to combat the rise of variants and/or infection rates.

Mr. Speaker, I just left from what some would call our “mother country.”

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Say that again.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Point of information.

The Speaker: Point of information?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, if the Member will yield.

The Speaker: Member, will you yield for a point of information?

Mr. Christopher Famous: I will yield.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Sure. Thank you, MP.

I believe that the getting vaccinated in order to travel has not been passed into law in the United States yet, which is why the . . . what do you call it, the Immigration . . . the Customs officers do not ask for verification or credentials with respect to vaccination. That is my understanding.

So I just thought I would say that, Member. Even though it is something that they said they are going to do, I do not think that this has become law yet.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, as of November 8, one has to—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. That is why I said, they announced that, but I don't think it was passed into law.

The Speaker: We are not at the point of your input of your point of information, Member.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, the point I am getting at is that countries around the world, including what some would call our “mother country,” bring in regulations as they see fit, rightly or wrongly.

I was in some people's mother country up until yesterday, and literally overnight one week ago it went from anyone traveling into the country has to do an antigen test on the second day of arrival to now, that they have to do a PCR test on the second day of arrival.

That has caused a bit of chaos because, unlike Bermuda, where we freely do testing for our citizens and our visitors, in the United Kingdom one has to pay for a test. Not only pay, but they have to stand in line out in the cold for hours to get a test if they wish to travel or if they have returned from travelling. So, when I compare what I see in Bermuda and how we have handled COVID-19, up until last week, Mr. Speaker, people in the UK were walking around with no masks; going into a restaurant, no SafeKey; going onto a bus, no mask; going into a restaurant, no mask. Now they have a spike in COVID-19. I wonder why.

So, I applaud that throughout all the challenges that we face as a country the Minister of Health with science as her . . . not her personal background but scientists working for the Ministry of Health providing information has helped to guide our country through the chaos that we see in other countries. So, I implore the public don't listen to the naysayers. Don't listen to the hype that is on the Internet. And don't listen to some politicians who are saying, ‘*Loosen the regulations*’ because they obviously did not read the play.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Honourable Member who just spoke prior to me for his submissions and his keen observations with respect to what is going on in other jurisdictions. And if I could just emphasise what he said with respect to the decision that we as a Government are making, we are certainly making them in the best interests of the public as well as bearing in mind the evidence and the scientific and medical information that we have at our disposal.

Mr. Speaker, the Member who spoke prior, the MP from constituency . . . MP Dunkley. (I am sorry, I do not remember the number right now.) [He] asked for me to try to provide my personal view as to what do I anticipate the next few months would look like. But I cannot help but indicate in my answer the response that he made when he did his submissions which is that none of us have a crystal ball. But what I can say, and I will repeat this again, is that the Government is committed to making decisions that are in the best interests of the people at large, recognising the information that we have at our disposal scientifically, medically and the like.

We know that we are all suffering from COVID-19 fatigue. Two weeks ago we did not even have the Omicron variant. So the reality is that this is not a fluid situation, as MP Famous spoke about. And we have to ensure that we take steps to best protect ourselves. We all know of people who have suffered economically, physically, mentally, emotionally, suffered loss of loved ones, have been unable to attend funerals of loved ones, and there is a myriad of circumstances that we all know personally and/or through our constituents or our family members who have suffered through COVID-19. And the reality is that it is going to be here for quite some time.

We have things at our disposal to help minimise the disease, such as use of the vaccinations and the boosters which are also now available. And, Mr. Speaker, we just have to also recognise that as a community the decisions that we make surrounding COVID-19 and surrounding the public health measures will impact us all.

As I said previously, it is not a situation such as if I decide to speed up the road and not wear my seatbelt where I may be impacting my own safety. These issues far exceed not adhering to public health measures, Mr. Speaker, far exceed my own safety. They will impact adversely potentially my family, my neighbours and the extended community.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank Honourable Members for their input and submissions, and I would like to move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

The Order has passed, and the appropriate message will be drafted and sent.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Members.

[Motion carried: The draft Order entitled Public Health (COVID-19) Emergency Extension (No. 7) Order 2021 was approved.]

The Speaker: Members, that now brings us to the next item on the Order Paper for today, which is the second reading of the Insurance Amendment Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2021 is to amend the [Insurance Act 1978](#) to provide for matters related to internationally active insurance groups.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's financial services sector is subject to the regulation and supervision of the Bermuda Monetary Authority. The Authority was established in 1969 under the [Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969](#). The [Insurance Act 1978](#) provides the Authority with substantive licensing, supervision and intervention powers to regulate the insurance industry in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the licensing and supervisory process is prescribed by law and supplemented by subsidiary legislation and guidance notes. These detail the classes of licence based on the nature of the business and related risk, reporting requirements, statutory financial statement filings, and vetting of controller shareholders among other aspects.

Mr. Speaker, in furtherance of the above the House would be aware that the Authority is a member of the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (the IAIS). Presently, the chief actuary serves as a member of the IAIS Executive Committee, while other senior members of the Authority serve as chair, chairs, and vice chairs for several subcommittees including, but not limited to, the following: Macropprudential Committee, the Insurance Capital Standard and Comparability Task Force, and the Policy Development Committee.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background the House is advised that the IAIS is a voluntary membership organisation of insurance supervisors and regulators from around the globe. Established in 1994, the IAIS is the primary international standard setting body responsible for developing and assisting in the implementation of supervisory material for insurance supervision.

Mr. Speaker, by way of explanation the IAIS has issued insurance core principles (ICPs) to encourage member jurisdictions to maintain high supervisory standards. ICPs establish the minimum requirements for effective supervision and are expected to be implemented and applied in a proportionate manner. In addition, the ICPs are applicable to the supervisor of all insurers within a jurisdiction. Accordingly, the IAIS strongly encourages implementation of the ICPs as a means to ensure that each jurisdiction has a framework for effective supervision.

Mr. Speaker, the IAIS common framework, ComFrame, provides quantitative and qualitative supervisory requirements tailored to the international activity and size of internationally active insurance groups. ComFrame 23 provides that a group-wide supervisor in cooperation with other involved supervisors determines whether an insurance group or an insurance legal entity operating through branches is an IAIG after considering whether it meets both of the following criteria: For internationally active, premiums are written in three or more jurisdictions including Bermuda and gross written premiums outside of the home jurisdiction are at least 10 per cent of the group's total gross written premiums. In size, based on a three-year rolling average, the total assets are at least \$50 billion or total gross written premiums are at least USD\$10 billion. It is expected that the group will be required to substantially meet all criteria in a definition.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the above, ComFrame 23 provides that a group-wide supervisor is required to identify the head of an IAIG on the control and risk basis as follows: The legal entity which controls all of the insurance legal entities within the group, and the non-insurance legal entities which pose a risk to the insurance operations. This approach is designed to ensure that there are no gaps or unnecessary duplication and supervision amongst jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, Part IV of the [principal] Act covers matters related to the insurance group supervision. Presently, this part of the Act does not provide for matters related to internationally active insurance groups. Recognising the need to put in place a framework that provides for such powers, the 1978 Act will be amended as a consequence of this proposal as follows: Section 6A of the Act will be amended by granting the Authority the power to make Rules regarding internationally active insurance groups.

A new section 27H will be added to the Act to provide for the manner in which the Authority may determine that an insurance group of which it is the current supervisor shall also qualify to be registered by the Authority as an internationally active insurance group.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority will be required to initially consult with other supervisors of the insurance group, and once the agreement has been reached the

Authority is required to notify the insurance group of its intention to make a determination. The insurance group shall then be allowed to make a written representation to the Authority and the Authority shall take such representations into account when making its final determination.

Additionally, the Authority shall be required to publish a list of all internationally active insurance groups on its website at www.bma.bm. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the changes to the Act, further details will be set out in Rules, together with guidance notes. As per the Authority's normal custom and practice all Rules and guidance documents will also be subject to public consultation in due course.

Mr. Speaker, the House is advised that the consultation process commenced in December 2020 via publication of the consultation paper entitled "Introduction of the Concept of Internationally Active Insurance Group Proposal" together with a draft Bill. In accordance with the Authority's normal custom and practice, a stakeholder response letter was published in February 2021 on the Authority's website. The House is advised that there were no material objections raised to the proposal.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments represent a collaborative effort between the Authority and various industry stakeholders. I would like to thank all of those persons within the Authority, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Ministry of Finance and the private sector who have assisted with the development of this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we on this side have no objection to the legislation or the amendment. It is clear what is trying to be done and we also note that a number of our international insurers that are domiciled here compete and do business in multi-jurisdictions. So in light of this, it has our blessings. I just have two questions. One is operational, and I will ask the operational one first. And then one is from a business perspective. And then I will be done.

The Minister just indicated that the details of these international AIGs [Active Insurance Groups] will be listed on the BMA website and you can access information on the company from the BMA website. Will this information be public information, or will it be password protected and you have to demonstrate that you have a legitimate interest in securing the infor-

mation from the website? That is my administrative question.

My operational question as far as the business perspective is concerned, I presume that we are talking about direct insurance and not reinsurance. And if we are talking about direct insurance, if the international company generates more than 50 per cent of its business outside of Bermuda, which is the host jurisdiction, which regulator would have primacy?

Will Bermuda still be the primary regulator because of the registration of the company irrespective of the percentage of the book that is written locally? Or will an overseas regulator be the primary regulator?

So, if I am writing 75 per cent of the insurance group, the reinsurance in the US, would the US regulator be the primary one versus the Bermuda regulator which is responsible because they are the host jurisdiction for the company?

And those are my few questions, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, the legislation is clear and those were my only questions. So, you have the blessings of the One Bermuda Alliance team.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

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

Any other Member? There are none.
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first question which was administrative in nature, my assumption is that the information, as is often the case with regulated entities in Bermuda, is publicly available on the BMA site. I can think of no reason why, in light of the regime here, the names of the parties who would be qualified as internationally active insurance groups would require passwords for folks to be able to access who is being regulated by the BMA.

Secondly, with respect to the second question around whether it is direct insurance or reinsurance, in my opening remarks I mentioned that there were certain criteria that would need to be evaluated in order to determine whether a company qualified as an internationally active insurance group and if there would need to be dialogue between the supervisors of that group to make a determination as to whether or not they had jurisdiction with respect to regulation of that group. So, the determination ultimately will be decided by the conversations that happen among the regulators in light of the criteria that have been set out in the Act. So inasmuch as the criteria determined that the entity should be regulated by Bermuda, then that is what will happen. If it is determined that it should happen somewhere else, then that is what will happen.

If there are no further questions, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy Speaker.

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

House in Committee at 3:49 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

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

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 4.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the Act to insert the new definition of "internationally active insurance group."

Clause 3 amends section 6A of the Act to afford power to the Authority to regulate internationally active insurance groups, and to ensure that any Rules made by the Authority shall apply to such groups.

Clause 4 amends the Act to provide for a new section 27H. The new section sets out the manner in which the Authority may determine that an insurance group that it currently supervises shall also qualify to be registered by the Authority as an internationally active insurance group [IAIG]. Under the new section 27H the Authority is granted the discretion to determine, in certain circumstances, that an insurance group is not an IAIG even if it meets the criteria or that the insurance group is an IAIG even if it does not meet the criteria. In considering whether an insurance group should be registered as an IAIG, the Authority may initially consult with the other competent authorities of the insurance group. Once the Authority has made a determination, the Authority is required to notify the insurance group of its intention to make such determination. The insurance group shall then be allowed to make written representations to the Authority. The Authority shall take such representations into account when making its final determination. The Authority shall be required to publish a list of all internationally active insurance groups for which it is the group supervisor on its website at www.bma.bm.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

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

Minister, just a quick question on clause 2, which is inserting a new definition and the categories that follow. I am just wondering whether the criteria that are set out as (a), (b) and (c), are those definitions that have been arrived upon by the Ministry in consultation with industry? You know, how were those criteria set?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Okay. Thank you.

The determination of the definitions is the remit of the BMA. And the BMA, as I mentioned in my introductory remarks, engaged in a consultation process with industry stakeholders around the legislation. So it is safe to assume that participants of the regulated entities have been consulted on the substance of the legislation.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, Mr. Chairman, a further question.

The Chairman: Continue.

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

And just in terms of that clause and how it is going to work, the definition there is subject to section 27H which is being inserted by clause 4. And the importance of it being subject to clause 4 is that the power or discretion of the Authority at clause 4(2) to still be able to depart from the fixed criteria. Is that right?

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That is correct.

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

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Minister, you can move the four clauses.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

Thank you, Minister Dickinson.

[Motion carried: The Insurance Amendment Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 3:55 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are no objections.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, that brings us to a conclusion of that particular matter. We will now move on to the next item that is on the Order Paper for today which is the second reading of the Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

COMPANIES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the House is the Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021. The principal aim of this Bill is to make two amendments to the [Companies Act 1981](#).

Mr. Speaker, the first amendment relates to section 2(9) of the Companies Act which was inadvertently repealed in its entirety by the [Digital Asset Issuance Act 2020](#) in consequence of the repeal of the definition of “appointed digital asset exchange.” Prior to the repeal of section 2(9) it provided that “The Minister may appoint a stock exchange” (or digital asset exchange) “and shall cause the appointment to be published in an appointed newspaper.” The intent of the digital asset issuance was to repeal only the words “digital asset exchange” of that subsection, not the subsection in its entirety.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pause here to explain that section 2(1) of the Companies Act, “stock exchange” means any stock exchange that is appointed by the Minister of Finance under section 2(9). There was no intent to remove the ability of the Minister to appoint a stock exchange. Therefore, this Bill reinstates section 2(9) in its original form to enable the Minister to appoint a stock exchange with retroactive effect from the 6th of May 2020 when the section was repealed.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to reinstate section 2(9) with retroactive effect from the 6th of May 2020 because the inadvertent repeal of that section was further complicated by the purported appointment of the Euronext Growth Oslo by way of a notice gazetted on 15 September 2021. This appointment has to be validated since the power to appoint a stock exchange by the Minister of Finance had been removed.

With consultation with industry, the Registrar of Companies discovered that in reliance on the purported appointment of the Euronext Growth Oslo certain law firms have been working with their clients and external clients on a listing for the Euronext Growth Oslo. Therefore, it is imperative to validate the appointment of the Euronext Growth Oslo.

Mr. Speaker, the second amendment relates to the electronic service of documents on the members of a company. The [Companies and Partnerships \(Electronic Registry\) Amendment Act 2020](#) was brought into force to facilitate the transition to an electronic registry system. The 2020 Act made provision for the filing with or issue by the Registrar of Companies of electronic records. Prior to the 2020 enactment, the Companies Act made provision for the ef-

fective use of electronic service of documents on the members of a company.

Following the replacement of that provision industry stakeholders have advised that it had been a useful tool for companies with large members of shareholders as it avoided cumbersome and costly mailings of hard copy documents. Therefore, this Bill reinstates that provision with retroactive effect from the 31st of March 2020, the date when the Companies and Partnerships (Electronic Registry) Amendment came into operation so as not to prejudice any company which may have been relying on the old provisions without realising that they had been repealed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: MP Pearman, you have the floor.

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

Thank you, Minister, for that detailed explanation as to the background of this Bill. And as the Minister has set out in his opening remarks and brief, really this Bill is targeted to doing two things: to ensure appointments onto international stock exchanges and also the delivery of electronic records.

I would just say from a very high level that we are supportive of this amendment, and it does have broad industry support. I declare my interest as a commercial attorney involved in this area. But I know that it has broad industry support well beyond simply the lawyers of Bermuda.

What this is about at its heart is of course attempts to modernise and support Bermuda’s company law in an ever-increasingly challenging international global competitive market. And so, it is critical to where the Government can be nimble and responsive to deal with these issues. And, of course, electronic filings may make someone’s eyes glaze over as being rather dull, but in today’s modern technology this is the vital way of information management and sharing on a global basis and, likewise, the flexibility to recognise new markets for Bermuda companies. Bermuda has around 600 publicly listed companies around the world on various stock exchanges, New York, Nasdaq, Hong Kong.

The Minister in his brief mentioned Norway. And these are fundamental and important. We must not forget that we might be a small dot in the ocean, but we are very much an international business hub. So, whenever the Government or Parliament is able to be responsive to the needs of the industry and streamline these matters and constantly adjust and keep updating for the betterment of the industry, this is a great thing. Ultimately, it is that industry together

with certain others on our Island that employs Bermudians, keeps us all going and, hopefully to some extent, pays the bills.

So, Minister, thank you. You have the Opposition's support on this. I understand that you have very broad industry support on this as well. And, yes, this is a good Bill that we support and would vote for.

So, thank you, Honourable Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Opposition for their support for this Bill and I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy.

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

House in Committee at 4:00 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

COMPANIES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

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

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, this Bill amends section 2 of the Companies Act 1981 with retrospective effect in relation to the appointment of stock exchanges for the purposes of that Act, to validate any appointment of a stock exchange made under that section since May 2020 and to insert section 2AA with retrospective effect in relation to delivery of electronic records, and to make minor and consequential amendments.

Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 5.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is the standard citation clause.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the Companies Act [1981] to re-insert subsection (9) which was repealed in error by Schedule 3 to the Digital Asset Is-

suance Act 2020 in consequence of the repeal of the definition of "appointed digital asset exchange." Subsection (9) also provides for the Minister of Finance to appoint a stock exchange and there was no intent to remove that power.

Clause 3 inserts new section 2AA into the Companies Act which relates to the delivery of electronic records that do not fall within section 2A. The provisions of this section are not new to the Companies Act. They were previously contained in the old section 2A of the Companies Act which was repealed by the Companies and Partnerships (Electronic Registry) Amendment Act 2020 with effect from 31 December 2020. The 2020 Act inserted a new section 2A into the Companies Act empowering the Minister of Finance to make regulations for the electronic submission of documents to the Registrar of Companies and electronic issuing of certificates and documents by the Registrar, but did not deal with electronic delivery of documents in other circumstances.

Clause 4 makes minor and consequential amendments. Subsection (1) amends the headnote of section 2A to avoid confusion with the new section 2AA, and substitutes "rules" for "regulations" in section 2A as the relevant provision was made in the Companies (Forms) Rules 1982 with effect from 7 June 2021. Subsection (2) repeals sections 3 and 46 of the Companies Amendment Act 2006. Section 3 of the 2006 Act inserted the old section 2A, and provided for a new section 2B (delivery of electronic records to the Registrar) which was never brought into effect by notice (as provided by section 46 of the 2006 Act), and has been superseded by the new section 2A as inserted by the Companies and Partnerships (Electronic Registry) Amendment Act 2020.

Clause 5 subsection (1) deems section 2 to have come into effect on 6 May 2020 which is the date the Digital Asset Issuance Act 2020 came into effect, so that there will have been no interruption in the power of the Minister of Finance to appoint a stock exchange under section 2(9) of the Companies Act [1981]. Subsection (2) validates any appointment of a stock exchange made by the Minister of Finance since 6 May 2020, in particular the appointment of Euronext Growth Oslo by notice published in the *Gazette* on 15 September 2021. Subsection (3) deems sections 3 and 4 to have come into effect on 31 May 2021, the commencement date of the Companies and Partnerships (Electronic Registry) Amendment Act 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, continue.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you, Minister, for your detailed explanation. Given the detail that you have provided, I do not think I have many questions at all.

My one question, I think, is to clause 3 of the Bill and the newly inserted [section] 2AA. As I read it, what [section] 2AA, subsection (6) and subsection (8) are doing is affording effectively statutory defences in the event of any accidental omission. And as I think you said earlier, both in debate and in Committee, this has retrospective effect. And if that is right, then I think we are done.

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, MP Pearman's observation is correct.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister of Finance. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Are there any further speakers?
There appear to be none.
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. 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 to that?
There appear to be none. Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none. Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.
Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 4:08 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

COMPANIES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, that moves us onto the next item on the Order Paper for today which is the second reading of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act (No. 2) 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

The purpose of the Bill is to provide for the following: To repeal and replace the Fourth Schedule of the [Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969](#); to repeal and replace the Second Schedule to the [Banks and Deposit Companies \(Fees\) Act 1975](#); to provide for an increase in the time for which the approved period of operations within the innovation hub may be extended; to empower the Authority to impose a fine in relation to certain statutory requirements under the [Investment Funds Act 2006](#); and to provide for related matters.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the Bermuda Monetary Authority undertook a comprehensive

review of its target operating model together with its fee structure in 2018. At the end of the review process, which culminated with a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process, the [Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment \(No. 3\) Act 2018](#) which contained the fee schedule for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 was passed by the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it is now intended that the Fourth Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 will be repealed and replaced with a Schedule that provides for the level of fees that will be applicable and the reference to a particular year will be removed.

A similar exercise is also being done in relation to the [Banks and Deposit Companies \(Fees\) Act 1975](#). Accordingly, the Bermuda Monetary Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 proposes to repeal and replace the Second Schedule, the Banks and Deposit Companies (Fees) Act 1975, by way of consequential amendments, notwithstanding that there will be no increases in fees payable thereunder.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the repeal and replacement of the fee schedules just noted, and based on a review conducted earlier this year, the Authority observed that a small number of existing fees within the Fourth Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 require alignment and/or additional precision. The Authority also determined that some new fees were required in relation to certain applications.

Mr. Speaker, section 20B of the Act provides that the fees prescribed in the Fourth Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 shall be paid by certain financial institutions in accordance with the legislation specified in the various Heads of the Fourth Schedule to the Bermuda Monetary Authority. As noted, the vast majority of the fees enforced in 2021 will be retained in 2022. Mr. Speaker, the House is advised that the Heads of the Fourth Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 under which some minor changes to fees are proposed, are as follows: The Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969; the [Corporate Service Provider Business Act 2012](#); the [Insurance Act 1978](#); and the [Investment Funds Act 2006](#).

Mr. Speaker, the summary of the changes proposed in respect to specific 2021 fees is as follows:

1. Fees related to the Corporate Service Provider Business Act 2012.

Section 13 of the Corporate Service Provider Business Act 2012 provides for matters related to annual licensing fees to be paid on or before the 31st of March in every year after the year in which the licence was granted. The fees are determined by class of licence, limited or unlimited, and also by the number of entities and corporate service provider services.

Mr. Speaker, in 2021, as part of the three-year graduated fee structure, the annual fee bands appli-

cable to corporate service providers servicing more than 2,000 entities but not more than 3,000 entities and those servicing more than 3,000 entities have been set at \$90,000 and \$120,000, respectively.

However, due to a transposition error it was incorrectly set at \$75,000 and \$90,000, respectively. Accordingly, it is proposed to amend the Act to ensure alignment of the fees with those which were previously consulted upon with stakeholders.

2. Insurance fees.

Mr. Speaker, the relevant changes to be made in this area are as follows: The applicable fees for innovative insurers will be revised in accordance with previous engagements with industry stakeholders, from \$630 to \$800. Innovative insurers will also be required to pay the same fee to cover the cost of analysis provided by the Authority.

Notes relating to application fees for extensions to submission deadlines for more than one filing will be clarified so that it is clear that only one fee is required. The scope fees related to extensions of filing deadlines will be expanded to include innovative insurers carrying on general business in an innovative and experimental manner. The present fee of \$1,500 a month will remain unchanged. Fees related to filing deadlines for innovative insurers will no longer be applicable. The House is advised that innovative insurers will be able to apply for extensions to continue in the hub under the provisions regarding the innovation hub.

Clause 2 of the Bill covers matters related to the extension period being increased from three months to up to 12 months, accordingly.

Clause 5 of the Bill addresses matters related to the fee increase regarding the innovation hub.

The scope of the application fees related to modifying the Loss Reserve Specialist opinions will be expanded to include innovative insurers carrying on general business in an innovative and experimental manner. The present fee of \$1,000 will remain unchanged.

Innovative intermediaries will now be required to pay a \$3,000 registration fee to be registered under the Act. Innovative insurers are being removed from annual filing fee provisions as it is not meant for this group to be captured under the relevant provisions of the Act.

As previously mentioned, innovative insurers will now be able to apply for an extension to utilise the innovation hub facility.

3. Investment funds fees, Schedule 1 of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, clause 6 of the Bill provides for consequential amendments to section 17 of the Investment Funds Act 2006.

Clarify the applicability of certain fees.

It is proposed to amend the IFA by clarifying that where a fund fails to comply with the deadline for certification of statement requirements imposed on it under the relevant sections of the IFA, the fund will be

required to pay a late filing fee for every month, whether in whole or in part of the month, where such certification has not been submitted to the Authority. The House is advised that the present late filing fee of \$50 will remain unchanged. The amendments are set out in Schedule 1 to the Bill. The Fourth Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 will also be updated to reflect the changes.

4. The Banks and Deposit Companies (Fees) Act 1975, Schedule 2 of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, clause 6 of the Bill provides for consequential amendments to the Banks and Deposit Companies (Fees) Act 1975. The Second Schedule to the Banks and Deposit Companies (Fees) Act 1975 will be repealed and replaced without increasing the fees, as a provision of the current Second Schedule which currently refers specifically to fees payable in 2019, 2020, and 2021 shall cease to apply at the end of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, key highlights of additional amendments are as follows:

Section 20G of the Act covers matters related to the innovation hub applications and requires persons to submit an application to the Authority to request an extension of the initial approval. Presently, the Authority may grant extensions for additional periods not exceeding three months. It is proposed to amend the Act to increase the time to a potential extension period operation within the innovation hub for a period of up to 12 months. The House is advised that there will be a requirement to amend section 20H to address the extension time period.

Extension fees will be increased from \$750 to \$1,500 to reflect the increase in the time and effort to be committed by the Authority. Application fees of \$3,000 will remain unchanged. Entities utilising the innovation hub may be required for a period of one year from the outset, but they are not required to pay annual fees.

Mr. Speaker, a floor amendment has been circulated for consideration by the Members. This floor amendment will modify the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 to clarify the registration fees provision for innovative intermediaries. There will be no change to the registration fee which is currently set at \$3,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reiterate that the amendments will result in the establishment of fees that were the subject of previous engagement with industry and recent consultation with industry stakeholders. There were no material issues raised in relation to this process which is not surprising given the nature of the changes.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the fees provided for by way of this Bill support the continued effective operation of the Bermuda Monetary Authority which performs a pivotal role in the financial services sector that is so vital to Bermuda's economy. The demands placed on the Authority continue to in-

crease due to the growth in certain sectors and the assumption of new responsibilities, and it is important that fees appropriately reflect cost related to regulation.

Mr. Speaker, by way of example, the investment fund sector which the Authority is responsible for overseeing, has seen the number of registrations increase from 629 in 2019, to 829 at the end of 2020. Similarly, in the insurance sector, the number of special purpose insurers has increased from 148 in 2019, to 165 in 2020. In a related sense, the innovation hub, which is a relatively new construct, so the introduction of one approved insurer in 2019, but four approved insurers have already been granted entry into the innovation hub this year.

These insurers are currently in the process of developing new products for the market. In 2019 and in 2020, one approved insurer was added to the insurance sandbox per year. In 2021, three new sandbox entrants have been approved, two being innovative insurance intermediaries and one being an innovative insurer.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank the Bermuda Monetary Authority, the Attorney General's Chambers, and the Ministry of Finance for their assistance with this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

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

We are in support of this legislation. I have to admit, it was a lot of work to go through and compare this new legislation and the new Schedule to the one that was passed in 2021. I am satisfied. I did that comparison, and it basically shows no major increases at this point in time.

I note that we have had adjustments to the fees in 2019, 2020, 2021, and some minor ones that came in 2021. So, my only question to the Minister is, When will the next review of fees take place?

We cannot continue to raise these fees annually if we want to remain competitive as a jurisdiction and we want to ensure that our insurance companies, our management services companies, our banks and trusts companies, and other companies that fall under the remit of the BMA know that there is certainty in regard to the fees for the next two or three years. Or will they have to adjust and expect another fee increase within the next year or two?

So, if the Minister could provide clarity in regard to the anticipated date of the next fee review, I would be obliged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Any other Member?
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I await some technical assistance with respect to some of the specifics of the Honourable Member's question. But while waiting for that, I will respond as follows: As a general rule, I think the BMA tends to conduct fee reviews every second or third year.

These reviews, I am almost certain, involve having a look at the competitive landscape, but also looking at the requirements and the regulatory burden being placed on the BMA as a result of their obligations to provide oversight of the regulated entities. Additionally, it has been the practice of the BMA, for as long as I have been involved here doing this job, to engage in fairly robust and broad consultation with their stakeholders. And so, when they do introduce fees, it is typically after having had fairly substantial conversations with the regulated entities for which they are responsible.

The last fee review (I am advised) was in 2018, which was performed on the basis of a three-year review with phased increases. That was completed and there were no significant changes to fees that immediately happened thereafter.

So, I think the general cycle tends to be every three years. Again, there was broad consultation. The BMA is certainly mindful of the cost of regulation and certainly is trying to strike a balance between its own obligations and the burden that it is placing on those it is responsible for regulating.

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

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, if there are no further questions, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Deputy Speaker.

House in Committee at 4:25 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further considera-

tion of the Bill entitled [Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2021](#).

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 5.

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Question. In the preamble, "Be it enacted by" that the "... Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and the House of Assembly of Bermuda."

On rare occasions I see the Senate mentioned in any legislation that comes to this House. Is there a reason for us to have the Senate here this time? Because it is just abnormal. I mean, I have been in the House 20 years, and I have not seen the Senate mentioned in any piece of legislation.

So, it may be right, it may be wrong, I just question it. And if the Minister could advise me on that it would be appreciated.

The Deputy Clerk: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

The Deputy Clerk: I would advise that this is the standard wording in the preambles. It is the usual wording we see in the preamble regarding the ... that calls about The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

The Chairman: It is in every Bill that is presented to the—

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The "Senate."

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Clerk: Yes, yes. I am saying that it is the standard wording, yes—including the Senate. Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. That is all I have on ...

The Chairman: That is all you have?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

The Deputy Clerk: The Minister wanted to do the clauses.

The Chairman: Minister, clauses 1 through 5.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 20G of the principal Act to increase the innovation hub extension period from “3 months” to “up to 12 months.”

Clause 3 amends section 20H of the principal Act by referencing the extension period of “up to 12 months.”

Clause 4 amends the Third Schedule of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 by deleting the term “Collective Investment Scheme” under the heading Financial Institutions and substituting “Investment Funds.”

Clause 5 amends the principal Act by repealing and replacing the Fourth Schedule to the Act to provide updates and technical amendments required relating to the following:

(a) under the heading, “Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969–Innovation Hub”: to repeal and replace subparagraphs 1 and 2 so as to revise the extension fee under section 20H(b);

(b) under the heading “Corporate Service Provider Business Act 2012”: to repeal and replace paragraphs 2(a)(vii) and (viii) as such fees were inadvertently omitted from the Part C 2021 Table;

(c) under the heading “Insurance Act 1978”:

- i. in paragraph 1(a) to insert the words “innovative insurer”;
- ii. in paragraphs 2(c), (x) and (z) to clarify the “Note” relating to application fees for extensions to submission deadlines for more than one filing whereby only one fee is required; in subparagraph 2(c)(i) and 2(ac) to insert the words “IIGB.” And in subparagraph 2(C)(iii) to delete “innovative insurers”;
- iii. in paragraph 2 to insert a new subparagraph (na) to provide for an application for cancellation for registration under section 42(1)(a) and the accompanying fee; and
- iv. in paragraph 3(c) to add the words “innovative intermediary.”

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

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

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: The Minister has just read some amendments, and the only amendment that I have and that we received reads that the “Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be amended in clause 5 in the Fourth Schedule under the heading ‘Insurance Act 1978’, in paragraph 3(c) on page 13 of the Bill- By inserting after ‘section 10’ the words ‘, or an innovative intermediary under the Act.’”

That is the only floor amendment that I have.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I have not addressed the floor amendment yet.

The Chairman: Yes, because I was wondering. Because you are only doing clauses 1 through 5.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: But I thought he finished addressing clauses 1 through 5?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I read them as is and then I am going to make the change once I kind of . . . I conveyed what is on the documents and now I am going to propose the change to what I have read for clause 5. Perhaps I should have done it differently and done clauses 1 through 4 and did clause 5 separately, but I didn’t.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Okay. Go ahead then.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Are we fine with clauses 1 through 4?

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Yes.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: So, by way of just some clarification, the amendments to clause 5 are covered within the overall repeal and replacement process. And I wanted to be very transparent around what we are doing here. So now I would like to deal with clause 5 which I have already moved and there is a floor amendment to clause 5.

The floor amendment reads as follows:

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 5

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be amended in clause 5 in the Fourth Schedule under the heading “Insurance Act 1978” in paragraph 3(c) on page 13 of the Bill-

By inserting after “section 10” the words “, or an innovative intermediary under the Act.”

And then continuing with (c), v. to revoke paragraph (7)(a)(xii) and (7)(a)(xiii).

And then (d) under the heading “Investment Funds Act 2006”: prescribe a late filing fee and to re-

insert previously omitted late filing fee overseas funds and closed-ended funds.

That is the floor amendment. So, Mr. Chairman, I am moving that clause 5 be approved with the amended language.

The Chairman: The amendment.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, point of clarification.

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Pearman.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Mr. Scott Pearman: I was with the Minister all the way until—

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman, can you come to the microphone? I am having difficulty hearing you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I was with the Minister all the way until the end of his change to (c) on page 13. But then he added a further amendment. I just wonder whether perhaps there are more than . . . is there more than one version of the floor amendment?

Was the floor amendment subsequently amended?

It may be that the Opposition Leader and I have a previous version of the floor amendment because the floor amendment we have ends after the amendment to paragraph 3(c) on page 13 of the Bill and the Honourable Minister then read some further amending language which does not appear to be on the piece of paper that we have been provided. I am sure it is not a problem; I just want to see if I can understand the confusion.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I can provide the clarity, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes, please.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 5 has four different [points]: (a), (b), (c), (d).

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: [Point] (c) actually has four subsections. And the amendment refers to clause 5, [point] (c). And the additional language that I just gave was . . .

[Pause]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: So, I am advised, Mr. Chairman, that the floor amendment simply addresses the fact that innovative intermediaries should have

been included in [the amendment to clause 5] paragraph 3(c) and such entities are to be subjected to a \$3,000 fee.

The other amendments that I have noted are all covered in the repeal and replace process.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Chairman, as far as I am concerned, subject to anything else that anyone else has to say, I understand what the Minister has said. I think when he was reading the floor amendment, he simply read a bit that was already part of the Bill.

But for the avoidance of any doubt whatsoever, I understand, we understand the Minister to be amending on page 13 of the Bill, 3(c), which is a box where it says “an insurance broker or agent under section 10” and to be inserting after that sentence the words “, or an innovative intermediary under the Act” such that either an insurance broker or agent under section 10 or an innovative intermediary under the Act will both be subject to a \$3,000 fine. (In the last column on that page.) And that is the extent of the floor amendment.

If I have correctly understood it, I think we are absolutely fine with it. Subject to anything the Opposition Leader may have to say. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for your indulgence.

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Thank you, MP Pearman, for your clarification. Spoken as only a good lawyer could do.

[Laughter]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, after all that confusion, I move that clause 5 be approved with the floor amendment.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 5 be approved as amended.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Clause 5 has been approved as amended.

[Motion carried: Clause 5 passed as amended.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 6 and 7.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, clause 6 provides for consequential amendments to section 17 of the Investment Funds Act 2006 to clarify the applicability of certain fees under the heading “Investment Funds Act 2006” of the Fourth Schedule; and to

repeal and replace the Second Schedule to the [Banks and Deposit Companies \(Fees\) Act 1975](#), as the provisions under the Second Schedule are anticipated to expire on 1 January 2022.

Clause 7 provides for the Bill to come into operation on 1 January 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none.
Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 6 and 7 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 6 and 7 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 6 and 7 passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as [amended].

The Chairman: You have got to move the Schedules. You have got a couple of Schedules there.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that . . .

The Chairman: That the Schedules be approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: That the . . .

[Pause]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Fourth Schedule be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?
There appear to be none.
Approved.

[Motion carried: Schedules passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

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

Any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as amended.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Opposition Leader Cole Simons and MP Pearman.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed as amended.]

The Chairman: Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 4:40 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill being reported to the House as amended?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as amended.

Members, that now brings us to the next item on the Order Paper which is the second reading of the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are requested now to give consideration to the Bill entitled Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes to amend the Customs Tariff Act 1970 by replacing the First Schedule. The purpose of this Bill is to implement all of the 2020 amendments with the international Harmonized System Nomenclature.

Honourable Members will recall that such an amendment to the First Schedule to the [Customs Tariff Act 1970](#) was last made in April 2017. At that time, all of the 2017 amendments to the HS [Harmonized System] Nomenclature were implemented in Bermuda's national customs tariff.

Mr. Speaker, HS 2022, which is the 7th edition of the Harmonized System Nomenclature will be used worldwide for the uniform classification of trade goods. HS serves as the basis for custom tariffs and for the compilation of international trade statistics in 211 economies. The new HS 2022 edition makes some 351 sets of amendments.

Mr. Speaker, the major features of the HS 2022 amendments are adaptations to current trade through the recognition of new product streams. Other significant changes address environmental and social issues of global concern. Mr. Speaker, visibility will be introduced to a number of high-profile product streams in the 2022 edition. This is done to take account of changing trade patterns. Electronic waste is one example of a product class which presents significant policy concerns as well as a high value of trade. Accordingly, HS 2022 includes specific provisions for its classification.

Another example is fresh provision for new tobacco and nicotine-based products. The new provision makes classification of these products easier, trade statistics more visible, and recognises the very high monetary value of trade in these goods. Aerial drones and smartphones are also given their own specific provisions for similar reasons.

Mr. Speaker, major changes have been made to the classification of glass fibres and articles thereof and for metal forming machinery. These changes recognise that the current subheadings do not adequately represent the technological advances in these sectors. Failure to take account of improvement in technology would cause classification difficulties and a lack of key trade statistics.

Mr. Speaker, one area is the growing interest in the classification of multi-purpose intermediate assemblies. Indeed, a very important example of such a product is addressed in HS 2022. Flat panel display modules will now be classified as a product in their own right. This will simplify classification of these modules by removing the need to identify final use.

Mr. Speaker, health and safety is also featured in the changes. Classification of infectious disease diagnostic test kits has been simplified. This will help reduce delays in the deployment of tools for the rapid diagnosis of infectious diseases and outbreaks. New provisions have been made for placebos and clinical trial kits for medical research. This will enable

classification without information on the ingredients in placebos, thereby facilitating cross-border medical research. Cell cultures and cell therapy are among the product classes that have gained new and specific provisions.

On a human security level, a number of new provisions specifically provide for various dual-use goods. These range from toxins to laboratory equipment. As Honourable Members may be aware, dual-use goods are items that can be used both for civilian and military applications. These types of goods are normally heavily regulated. That is because they can be manufactured and treated for civilian use and then transformed for military purposes, or worse, used for terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, the protection of society and the fight against terrorism are increasingly important roles for national custom authorities. Many new subheadings have therefore been created for dual-use goods that could be diverted for unauthorised use. Such goods include radioactive materials and biological safety cabinets, as well as items required for the construction of improvised explosive devices such as detonators.

Mr. Speaker, goods specifically controlled under the various conventions have also been updated. The HS 2022 edition introduces new classifications for specific chemicals controlled under the Chemical Weapons Convention [OPCW], certain hazardous chemicals controlled under the Rotterdam Convention, certain persistent organic pollutants controlled under the Stockholm Convention, and gases controlled under the Kigali Amendment of the Montreal Protocol. Furthermore, at the request of the International Narcotics Control Board [INCB] new subheadings have been introduced for the monitoring and control of Fentanyl and the derivatives and precursors, and their derivatives and precursors.

Mr. Speaker, contracting parties to HS Convention are expected to enact the HS 2022 amendments to their respective nomenclatures by 1 January 2022. However, it has been determined that for Bermuda, a non-contracting economy, it will be simpler administratively and more cost-effective to bring these changes into operation on 1 April 2022. However, by progressing the legislation at this time, it allows for effective consideration of these matters in the budget process.

Mr. Speaker, in closing my brief on the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Bill, I wish to note that these HS 2022-related changes to the Bermuda nomenclature shall be entirely revenue neutral. Further textural or duty rate changes, as appropriate, will be proposed as part of the Government's 2022/23 budget. I will comment further on the measures of the Bill in Committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition have no objection to this amendment because in essence what we are doing is ensuring that our customs classifications are uniform in regard to our global obligations in regard to how we manage our general commercial products, military products, and health products. In addition, it also addresses our obligations from a customs point of view in regard to drug interdiction and our AML obligations.

So in essence, Mr. Speaker, we are part of a global community when it comes to the shipping of goods and services around the world and we cannot operate in isolation. So, if we are to remain competitive, and if we are going to play our role in global society from the customs perspective, and these are the minimum standards of operation for membership of the global customs fraternity, then, Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition truly have no objection to this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Opposition for their support for this Bill and I move that it be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy.

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

House in Committee at 4:50 pm

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

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Customs Tariff Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2021](#).

Minister Dickinson, you have the floor.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 seeks to amend the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act 1970. Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 3.

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Clause 1 is self-explanatory providing the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 repeals and replaces the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act 1970 with the contents of the Schedule to this Bill which incorporates all of the HS 2022 changes. The First Schedule is published on the Bermuda Government portal at the following web address:

www.gov.bm/schedules-customs-tariff-act-1970.

Clause 3 provides for commencement on 1 April 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any further speakers?

There appear to be none, Minister.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. Approved.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Schedules be approved.

The Chairman: Schedules? Yes.

It has been moved that the Schedules be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. Approved.

[Motion carried: Schedule passed.]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Opposition Leader Cole Simons.

Mr. Speaker.

House resumed at 4:52 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, that brings us to a close of business for the day. We will now do the third readings. We will start with . . . well, Minister of Finance, they are all yours.

Minister of Finance, would you like to do your third readings?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are none, continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Insurance Amendment Act 2021 was given a third reading and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are none, continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

COMPANIES AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

Thank you. Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Companies Amendment and Validation Act 2021 was given a third reading and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are none, continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

Next item.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was given a third reading and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are none, continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2021**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Customs Tariff Amendment (No. 2) Act 2021 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. Thank you, Ministers, for your participation today.
Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, at this time it is my pleasure to move that this Honourable House—

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Before you move, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, Deputy.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, Mr. Speaker.
I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended—

The Speaker: Yes, I forgot . . . one second, Mr. Premier. I forgot that the Deputy has the most important thing that he likes to do every year around this time.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: And I was not allowing him to have that privilege.

Deputy, go right ahead.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that a message be sent to the Senate conveying Christmas and New Year's greetings.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

MESSAGE TO THE SENATE**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS**

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: "To the Honourable the President and the Members of the Senate:

"The Speaker and the Members of the House of Assembly desire to extend to the President and Members of the Senate our greetings and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year."

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, I have another one.

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year be conveyed to His Honour the Speaker.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

MESSAGE TO THE SPEAKER**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS**

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: I move that His Honour the Speaker be requested to accept Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year from the Members of the House of Assembly.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Mr. Speaker, I have a final one.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year be conveyed to Her Excellency the Governor, Ms. Rena Lalgie.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNOR**CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS**

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: I move that his Honour the Speaker, be requested to convey to Her Excellency the Governor, Ms. Rena Lalgie, hearty Christmas greetings and best wishes for the New Year from the Speaker and the Members of the House of Assembly.

And greetings to all Members of the House of Assembly for the holidays.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy, thank you for that.

I accept the well wishes, and in return I likewise do the same for all Members and their families. I trust that during this holiday season we will get to spend time with our loved ones and enjoy the reason for season.

Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 4 February 2022.

And I am informed, certainly, and I know that at least one of my Members will be speaking on the motion to adjourn, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: At least one? That's sounds good. Just one?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: If you wish to throw down the gavel so quickly; it is a merry Christmas.

And I would like to let you know, Mr. Speaker, I do intend to close out today's motion to adjourn.

The Speaker: Well, we will make you the second speaker. How is that?

[Laughter]

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

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

The Speaker: That sounds like a voice from the east.

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

The Speaker: MP Foggo, you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—GOVERNMENT MUST BE ALL-EMBRACING IN FIGHT AGAINST

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first let me make an apology to the House and the people of Bermuda, because when I asked for a point of information, I put out some information that was incorrect in the way in which I presented it. And for that I apologise to the Member Chris Famous, but more importantly, I apologise to the House and to the people of Bermuda because I would never ever want to be seen as inciting people or inadvertently encouraging people to disobey the rules.

And I have left a message for Member Famous to explain actually what I was trying to explain to the House and did a poor job of that. And so I hope the House accepts my apology on that one.

The Speaker: Accepted.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, it is the end of a year. It is not the end of our fiscal year, but it is almost the end of the calendar year. And, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time before we break for the holidays I feel it is important to remind Bermudians that as a Government how tirelessly we have worked to try and provide our people with an atmosphere and an infrastructure that will allow them to manage throughout what has been proving to be a very difficult economic time, and a very difficult time in terms of the crises that we face and the world faces with COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, it behoves me to remind people that in spite of some of the regulations that this Government has put in place, [they] have been met with the chagrin of many people and with the well-wishers and praises of many others. Nonetheless, this Government has put in policies that we believe have been in the best interests of the people involved.

I have to say that when we look at things like the unemployment benefit, when we are still putting in apprenticeship programmes, when we have put moratoriums on various categories of work to ensure that Bermudians are first and foremost for employment, we understand that these are measures that we have to take in order to help our people survive what is a very, very trying situation.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget the health regulations with quarantines, where we locked down the economy at times and we have seen businesses close. We have seen other businesses open, you know, for those who have a real entrepreneurial spirit who through all of this have been able to find a way to open up businesses. Having said that, we have the BEDC that has given loans to small businesses to assist them through this problem with COVID-19. We have seen small grants being given to sports clubs and the like because of the programmes that they offered, all under the mantra of trying to help move our Bermudian people forward.

I point all of that out to say that because of the trying times it makes it difficult for people to sometimes appreciate and see that, in spite of it all, we are

still trying to operate in a manner that will indeed help our people to move forward, help our economy to move forward. And in a situation where we have a Government that does not have money to spare, so to speak, it requires us to use our ingenuity to try to manage through this situation where, no matter what, through it all the end result will be a win-win. That is our focus. That is what we are trying to produce. And though there are people and businesses that have fallen along the way, we are still keenly focused on trying to ensure that in spite of it all we help our people to march forward from 2021 into 2022, and march forward to better days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I still believe that we in Government have differing opinions, especially in regard to the health crisis. I still believe, and I believe my Government believes—in fact I know that they do—that we have to be the voice for all. And in saying that, there is still a large constituency of persons who want our Government to continue to try and implement policies and measures that embrace all, regardless of what type of ends they employ to combat this COVID-19 battle. So, once again, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to encourage and ask my Government to continue to do things and to continue to employ measures that are all-embracing.

So, while the Government has promoted vaccinations—and let me say up front that it is every person's personal choice in terms of getting vaccinated or not to help combat this war on COVID-19—I do believe that it is incumbent upon us to look at the science, which is constantly changing, and to look at other measures that are proving to be quite effective in this fight against COVID-19. And where and when the Government can, looking at the science, [they should] employ those measures because, Mr. Speaker, one thing that has been made very clear, early treatment in this fight against COVID-19 has proven very beneficial for those who suffer under COVID-19 because we know that there is at least between a 98 per cent to 99 per cent recovery rate for COVID-19.

So, even for those who have sadly lost their lives and for those who have been struck down extremely ill from COVID-19, or who have experienced long-term effects—when I say long-term, I mean ongoing effects from COVID-19 who have recovered but are still suffering certain ailments as a result of COVID-19—we know early intervention helps prevent all of this and that there are doctors who are using other medications that are proving to be successful.

In fact, if a drug has been approved by the FDA for medical purposes the FDA does not then dictate to doctors. If doctors find that they are using drugs to treat people differently, the FDA does not dictate to them that they cannot do this. In fact, we all know of . . . for instance, the doctors sometimes treat women for menopause, and they give them antidepressant drugs. But certain types of antidepressant

drugs are very beneficial for persons who are going through menopause and suffering from hot flashes. Doctors with cancer patients sometimes find themselves in a situation where a typical drug for this type of cancer is also beneficial for something else, yet that is not what it has been prescribed for. And the profession has always been respected in terms of nobody questions when they treat their patients as long as the doctor is trying to remedy the situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know there are persons who prefer to employ other methodologies for the treatment of COVID-19. And those persons do not necessarily speak out against vaccination or anything like that, they just may not believe that vaccination is in their best interests and, in some cases, [it has been] proven medically that it is not, or for religious reasons that it is not. It is their choice.

So, I would encourage when you have (and this is not the Government, this is private enterprise) insurance companies who have, I guess, taken it upon themselves to decide that they are not going to cover drugs that they had previously covered because they now believe that those drugs are being used for something else, I say to our Government that is something that we should definitely look into. Are we now putting the power into the hands of the insurance companies to decide what gets covered in the administering of drugs that if a doctor is not going to use it for (a) over here; but they are going to use it for (b) over there, that they are not going to honour that now? It is a concern for me, because where does it stop? And will they use this as a precedent to then wield their authority in other situations?

So, I would ask my Government to look at that under a lens with a view to ensuring that this type of behaviour stops, because it should not be allowed that an insurance company has authority and say, indirectly, over what doctors prescribe for treatment and they are not going to honour that by covering it with insurance even though you have the patients who pay for their insurance. It should not fall under their remit. I would hope that we look into that practice because, again I ask, where next will they go in terms of saying they are not going to cover this because they don't feel like it, because this doctor is using it to treat toe fungus and it says on the back of it that it is used to treat tongue fungus?

I am using very simple examples to try and explain what I think is a situation that requires Government to look at under the microscope because we cannot give power to organisations like that, and they inadvertently have power over people's health.

Again, I would say to my Government to lead the way (we have been doing it all this time), continue to lead the way by demonstrating that we govern for all, and we do, and demonstrating that in our actions even when it comes to health care [we can] meet with health care providers and listen to and hear some of the . . . or even meet with some of the people who

have benefitted from some of the treatments and use that information along with other verified research to employ other measures. As was said earlier today, we do not know when this issue with COVID-19 is going to end. And we need to have an open-minded approach and we need to employ a multi-pronged approach because I think what we can say is that it is imperative that we do get on top of this situation.

We do not want to see more businesses fold because of measures that may have to be put in place if we find ourselves in a situation where, in respect of COVID-19, things are getting unmanageable again. We do not want our children in situations where they cannot get the real benefit from a social point of view of being in the classroom and in the school setting and they are forced to stay at home learning online. There is some real education that takes place when young people are allowed to mix together. It is not all just from books, as we all know. They learn how to conduct themselves and uphold themselves within a society. So, when you look at some higher-learning institutions, they have a real concern about what degree of learning is taking place, especially when children are forced to do most of their learning online.

I know it is something that is of concern to the Ministry of Education, and I have no doubt that they have their eye on this. We do not want young ones graduating and moving up the ladder within the education realm and finding that there are glaring deficits that were not easy to capture because of the online delivery.

So, I want the people of Bermuda to know that I stand steadfast with my Government in terms of fighting this war on COVID-19, and that we as a Government are there to try to do what is necessary to get us through this fight and through this economic decline in a positive way, and in a way where people can move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everybody a very merry Christmas. And I want to wish them a happy New Year when it comes. I want them to know that we will go forward together and that we can win this fight if we stand as one, regardless of what ammunition we pick up in fighting this battle.

Mr. Speaker, you too have a very merry Christmas and happy New Year.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution this evening? Any other Member?

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

The Speaker: I am trying to catch your voice.

Hon. N. H. Cole Simons: Opposition Leader.

The Speaker: Ah, Opposition Leader, yes, go right ahead. You have your 20 minutes.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

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

I was not prepared for today's finale, but anyway, it is here for the end of the Christmas term, so to speak. As we all know, this year has been a very special year, a time for reflection. It has been the height of our individual and collective journey as politicians, as parties and as a country.

We have travelled through difficult times throughout the year, and we have travelled through successful times throughout the year. And those difficulties and successes have carried us through 2021. So now, as we reflect on where we were, it is time for us as a country, as individuals, as parliamentarians to begin a new year which will mark a new season of our lives. We must re-examine our accomplishments, we must re-examine the challenges, and, as I said, it is time for us to clearly focus on our dreams, our possibilities, our new hopes and new aspirations for our families, for our country and for ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for us as a country to renew our collective resolve to unite behind a vision of cohesiveness, a vision of an inclusive society in pursuit of our individual freedoms, human rights, peace and, I underscore, shared prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, obviously 2021 is no ordinary festive season. Like 2020 it was a difficult year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought hardship and disruption and pain to all of our lives, be it Government, be it Opposition, be it family members, be it neighbours, be it friends, be it brothers or sisters. I would also like to take this time to remember those families who have lost loved ones and are facing their first Christmas with pain and sorrow because of the difficult year they have had and the loss of their family [member]. I think as politicians, we need to embrace those families so that they know that we are here to support them during this time of grief. A kind word, sharing a meal, or even just touching base can do so much for those families who are going through difficult times this Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to thank our frontline workers, our health care workers, hospital staff, our teachers, the grocery store staff, retailers, our armed forces, the Bermuda Police Service, and the Fire [and Rescue] Services, for without their support we cannot and would not have been able to be where we are today.

I would also like to recognise the support of our community at large. Again, we have had four spikes. And, generally speaking, most of Bermuda has been disciplined in regard to the protocols that are continued to be prescribed by the Minister of Health. We have had a few irresponsible people who have caused some challenge. But, generally speaking, I and the One Bermuda Alliance, and I expect the entire House, all of us salute most Bermudians who adhere

to COVID-19 protocols to ensure that their families and our community are safe.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I will not be long. We need to stand together and build a united and prosperous Bermuda. So, on behalf of my family, the One Bermuda Alliance, I say merry Christmas to Bermuda, to you and your family Mr. Speaker, and to residents of constituency 8, Smith's South.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Tyrrell, you have your 20 minutes.

PLP GOVERNMENT DELIVERING ITS MANDATE

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the motion to adjourn this evening. As usual, I will be brief, and hopefully not too repetitive.

Mr. Speaker, I will shortly be celebrating five years in this Honourable House. In fact, it's ten days from now. Without any reservation I can state that I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of the PLP team whose main aim has been to legislate for the betterment of Bermuda. I should also add that your guidance during my time has been appreciated. So I say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I almost did not make it here. In fact, you and many others would probably be familiar that prior to December 2016 I had failed on three consecutive occasions to win a seat, in 2003, 2007, and 2012. All painful losses. But I guess I can truly attest to the saying, *no pain no growth*. Mr. Speaker, after the third time I had a heart-to-heart discussion with former Premier Dame Jennifer [Smith] who, in her brief and wise style, reminded me of her failed six attempts. Dame Jennifer told me to do the math, suck it up and get on with it. Following that pep talk, I then had a discussion with my very good friend and cousin, MP Christopher Famous, who also encouraged me to hang in there. And, as the saying goes, from the bye-election in 2016 the rest is history.

Mr. Speaker, I started my comments with that story deliberately in order to take the opportunity to publicly thank in particular those two colleagues who supported me, and also my family. They are the reason I stand in this House today, warts and all. I initially came in as an Opposition Member and worked with an Opposition team that, in my opinion, understood its role and held its own on the floor of the House of Assembly. Six months later, in the 2017 General Election, I was again fortunate to be sent back here by the constituents of C-26 as a Member of the Government in this Honourable House, and again in 2020, as I am

now, under our present leader, the Honourable E. David Burt.

Mr. Speaker, that is my opening. I will now change gears. I used the term earlier that the PLP were an Opposition that understood its role and held its own. I use that term to make a comparison between the PLP team in Opposition and the present OBA Opposition. I do not wish to be unkind to this Opposition, it is just my opinion, in describing them as long on rhetoric, mostly negative, bringing few ideas or suggestions of any substance. The same Opposition constantly gets to their feet [wanting to] have a *Kumbaya* moment and, like parrots, state that they want to work with this Government, and then, Mr. Speaker, later on they slowly slip into a moment of tearing down our programmes as if they could have done better.

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

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Again, in my view.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We have had two pieces of business and four Bills today, all of which were carried out with bipartisan support. He is misleading the House.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker, I accept that point of order, but let me say that today I guess is an aberration, but I can also say that I could have probably summed it up . . . No, I won't go there. I will just continue, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, try and find a stronger line to take. I will remind all Members that the whole process of parliament is a scrutinising process. Scrutiny comes with different opinions, different viewpoints and that is what we are here for.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that as well. However, I just want to say that their one term did not end well. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Opposition that just as the public is watching us as Government, the public is watching and grading them as Opposition.

So, if they continue to try and score political points giving the impression that they do care, well, that is fine. They are failing. The public will remember that contract though that was signed in the dark, that saddled us as taxpayers with 30 years of financial MRG payments. That event is going to be hard to forget.

Mr. Speaker, it would be appropriate if you would allow me to quote a brief statement that I saw in the *Royal Gazette* recently. May I? It is very short.

The Speaker: Keep it short.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker, it says. *It's easy to judge when you are not in the driver's seat.* It is not difficult to imagine that I am proud to be contributing to this PLP Government.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker, am I speaking only? I hear something in the background.

The Speaker: Members, just remember to mute your microphones.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you.

The Speaker: Continue MP.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: What I was saying is that it is not difficult to imagine that I am proud to be a contributing Member of the PLP Government, a Government that has shown on many occasions that we are here for the benefit of all of Bermuda. Not a select few. We do not have any intentions of leaving anyone behind. Our success list is long and open for public scrutiny. In fact, the Member before me spoke of many of those successes, so I will not repeat them, and I will not go on. But all those successes have shown us as a caring Government.

Mr. Speaker, I will be cautious to not reflect on a previous debate. However, it would be remiss of me not to state that I support *all* of those items promised in the recent Speech from the Throne, even if it was described in the Reply by some as being short in what it delivered.

Mr. Speaker, it did not take rocket science to note that our approach has been calculated in how we acknowledge our mandate, and how well we have presented to the people the direction in which we wish to take Bermuda. This follows, in my opinion, our sound management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our management of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Speaker, has not gone unnoticed, as many of my constituents have sent several complimentary notes and made calls expressing their support for this Government's approach to keeping us safe. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take this opportunity, as many others have already done, to thank all of the essential and frontline workers who have and continue to do yeoman work under very trying conditions. Those of you essential and on the frontline, we appreciate you. Again, I say thank you and I encourage everyone to give them the respect that they are due.

Mr. Speaker, again, not wanting to reflect on any previous debate, I wish to commend our Ministers for their press conferences since the Speech from the Throne, clearly explaining our initiatives in detail to the public and laying out those things that will support our Economic Recovery Plan. We have a plan, something I hope the Opposition Members not only listened to but took note of the fleshing out of our proposals which complemented the items that were in the Speech from the Throne. Mr. Speaker, again I say it is clear, this PLP Government has a plan.

Mr. Speaker, I remind us of promises made by this Government, promises this Government intends to keep to the people of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, since my time in the House and especially over the last 20 months, this Government has had to make several tough decisions to move and execute our mandate and promises to the electorate, especially now, with our Economic Recovery Plan. Now, knowing my colleagues as I do, I wish to assure the public that those 31 priority items over seven key areas will be addressed, leading us to lowering our debt and providing opportunity for Bermudian people to prosper. It takes time.

Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that governing is difficult. You do not get to please everyone. It may appear to some that we have been slow in delivery, but this PLP Government has chosen to be steady and deliberate in producing satisfactory results. Our intention, as often mentioned by Premier Burt, is to measure twice, cut once.

Mr. Speaker, as I draw near to wrapping up my comments, with the upcoming holiday season upon us, I wish to make three appeals to the public on things that have been concerning me. First, to our young people: please understand that life is precious. We live on an Island envied by many. I ask that you make responsible choices and decisions in all that you do; your future, your friends' and families' future depend on those choices and decisions.

Second, to the general public, whether you are younger or older: please use courtesy on our roads. It is *scary* watching traffic coming toward me in the morning in the third lane and with the expressions of road rage. People, we can do better. We can do better on our roads.

Third, especially during the upcoming season, please, let's all be kinder to each other. We seem to have lost our human touch and the Bermudian way. As many of us were taught when we were young, a *good morning* and *hello* still go a long way.

Mr. Speaker, in making those three appeals together with the investment this Government is making in our people, I am hopeful these will lead to a better Bermuda for us all.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of my five years in this Honourable House, I will end my brief comments by saying, as I started, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here so far, and I further pledge to continue to do

my best to assist this Government in fulfilling our promises and executing our mandate to the people of Bermuda. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will end by expressing season's greetings to all. I wish my colleagues and all Bermuda a safe and happy holiday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Is that Minister Furbert?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, it is, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Furbert, you have your 20 minutes.

CLARIEN BANK CHARGING IN-PERSON TELLER FEES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you. I surely will not take 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to talk about an issue that has been on my mind and has been pressing for some time. Mr. Speaker, I do want to bring the public's attention, which they already know because I have had tons of people contact me already, sending me screenshots of a particular bank's change in their schedule of banking fees. Mr. Speaker, I feel as though I have to address this. Many may have seen already where a particular bank has put out a change to their banking fees where they will be charging or they have already started to charge, because this is now [in effect] as of November 5, 2021, where they are charging persons for in-person teller fees. And I believe it is about five dollars for different transactions.

Mr. Speaker, I have to call out the bank's name because I do not want all of the banks to be known as being in this category or acting in this capacity, and the bank that I speak of is Clarien Bank. Mr. Speaker, we must all agree that banking is essential. It is essential to our community. It is essential to our people. And even though we are moving toward a digital age, Mr. Speaker, we must give our people time, we must give our people options. We must not leave people behind in the process of electronic banking or [in] the digital age.

While you and I may be tech savvy, there are many people who are not. And there are many seniors, in particular, no matter how much time we can take to teach someone something new it will still be challenging for them to achieve, because in the electronic world things are constantly changing. They are constantly being updated, and if you are not someone who is constantly on a computer or on a smartphone device, you will lose track!

I am sure we all recognise that we have to go into our smartphones, and we have to do updates to be able to stay current with the apps that we have. Right? It is constantly moving; it is constantly changing. And so, there are many persons who just will have difficulty catching up and staying in tune with the constant change of technology. And so, we must understand that, Mr. Speaker. We must not leave people behind in the process.

I have to speak to this. The fee is five dollars. Particularly for seniors who are already having to decide how they are going to use their money, you know, we have to embrace having a fair and just system and continuing with access. While I have an appreciation again for the digital age—because I myself do not like standing in lines to wait, I am a person who likes to multitask. So, if I can do my banking online while I am doing something else—I have an appreciation for that. But there are many people who still appreciate that in-person experience where they can talk to someone and get a better understanding. They can look into someone's eyes. They can read someone's lips so that they get a better processing of what is being told to them, particularly as it relates to someone's money.

Mr. Speaker, seniors who are on fixed incomes, persons who are less tech savvy, we know persons with disabilities who will find themselves as being the most disadvantaged population, the [largest segment] of the population who are living in poverty. I do not understand this, Mr. Speaker. Why would we want to leave people behind like this? We must not treat people like this, Mr. Speaker. We must be fair regardless of their age or their health status.

We have a rapidly growing senior population, Mr. Speaker, and that includes all of us, because we will all be seniors one day. And we have to be very knowledgeable about how this will affect us as well! While, as we age, we might be a little bit more technical savvy, but as I said, it is a changing industry, and so we are not going to be as well in tune as we age.

And so, Mr. Speaker, banks must modify their services. They must give people time. They must give people time to understand this electronic banking. They must minimise the impact that it has on persons who are more disadvantaged and persons who are less tech savvy, particularly in this period of financial crimes, Mr. Speaker.

Okay, so we force seniors to go and use a digital platform. Like I said, everyone is not going to get it, and so, we also know that there is an increase of financial abuse against seniors. So, they are going to have to ask someone to help them to do their banking online. That is going to lead to all sorts of problems, Mr. Speaker. It is going to increase the risk of financial abuse, Mr. Speaker. They will give their banking information to someone to do a transaction for them online, and when they look, their money is going to be swiped right from under their noses.

So, I urge the Clarien Bank or any other bank who is considering doing this to not do it, Mr. Speaker. Create opportunities for access, create opportunities for in-person banking, again, banking being an essential service, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I would like to see the continuance of education and providing opportunities to be able to use digital platforms right directly in the bank, or providing some sort of online education forum to help persons to stay abreast with these new digital platforms. It is a must.

We have to put provisions in place, Mr. Speaker. We must continue to not allow our banking institutions to get away with things like this. It is just . . . it is plain wrong to put a five-dollar fee in place for in-person teller services. It is not fair or just. Just like it is not fair or just to include COVID-19 as a reason for why you cannot claim on your mortgage protection insurance. Who does this, Mr. Speaker? But they only do it if we are allowing them to do it!

Mr. Speaker, today is Humans Rights Day, and so we must continue to do things right. We must continue to protect people. We must continue to protect the rights of people. Mr. Speaker, we must put banking conduct codes in place to protect our people. We will all be seniors.

It cracks me up every time when we speak about persons who are seniors or elderly, forgetting that we are going to be in that place one day. Well, maybe not forgetting, but not seriously acknowledging that the issues that our seniors face may also affect us as well. And so, we must protect ourselves. Mr. Speaker, I had to get that off my thoughts and off my mind. I would seriously want our banking institutions to reconsider these banking fees and to not charge them at all, because they do disadvantage many persons.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Hon. Tinee Furbert: At this time, Mr. Speaker, I do want to remind everyone to look out for your loved ones, look out for people who are in need. I think we do come together as a community and do support one another during this Christmas season, and as my constituent, Ms. Sherry Bailey, would say, *Do not leave the birthday boy out of his own celebration.*

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to my constituents and also Bermuda as a whole in general, have a very merry Christmas, have a very Happy New Year. To everyone, please be safe as you enjoy your celebrations, enjoy your families, enjoy your loved ones, and we will see you and resume in the House come next year. And the same regards season's greetings to my colleagues, as well as yourself, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister and likewise, I return to you good wishes for the holiday season and the New Year.

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

MP Richardson, you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—BERMUDIANS URGED TO REMAIN VIGILANT

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Good evening. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to speak today.

I am going to end as I ended the last session by speaking about COVID-19, though in the context of a survivor. And I do not want to be overly dramatic, but I really want to have the public understand that we as Members of Parliament do really understand the context of the challenges that we are all going through when it comes to COVID-19.

I want to emphasise that I do not take it lightly. And the reality for me is that when the Minister of Health announces that there has been yet another death, I am sorrowful for the family that is going through that, but I am also honestly mindful of the fact that it could have been me. When I had the virus, it was explained to me that, *Anthony, irrespective of your personal experience, it could have been much worse.* And so, to each and every family member that has experienced a loss, I offer my condolences yet again. And as others have already spoken, I recognise that during this Christmas season, a time of almost universal celebration, those persons may feel it even more so, because this would be the first Christmas without their loved one.

On a constructive note, I certainly want to also encourage every single person in Bermuda to remain vigilant in the context of COVID-19. It does not matter whether you are vaccinated or not, follow the guidelines that have been announced, emphasised, repeated by the Minister of Health and everyone else. I want to also encourage us all to have a balanced discussion around COVID-19, not vaccinated versus unvaccinated, but the reality is that we are in this boat together. And on that note, I want to speak briefly to the Government strategy around risk mitigation.

I will again heartily commend the Premier because he did say to me some time ago that the Government is trying its best to minimise the incidence of COVID-19 in Bermuda. And more recently, the Government has announced that it is going to be more flexible when it comes to the COVID-19 protocols. And one basis of the increased flexibility is the fact that there are now more persons in Bermuda who are vaccinated. And I want the public to understand that yes, we do not all agree with every single thing that the Government has done in the context of COVID-19 protocols. There has been significant inconvenience, I'll underscore that—significant inconvenience. But if we look at the Government strategy, we have to give credit to the fact that it is practical.

And so, I will say again, the Premier stated that now that there are more persons who are vaccinated, Bermuda's approach to the whole COVID-19 protocols can be a little bit more relaxed. But in that context, we all have to still remain sensible, follow the guidelines, wear a mask, [practice] hand sanitising, social distancing where appropriate and all the rest of those things. And I do note that given that we are now in the Christmas season and the Honourable Tinee Furbert who just spoke about it and encouraged not to forget the "birthday boy" during this time of celebration, because it is a Christian holiday in celebrating and recognising Jesus Christ's birth.

But while we all go through this, normally a happy period, let's still as best we can minimise those that we interact with. We have to be creative in finding other ways to celebrate with our families. Let's make sure that we do not leave out those persons in our families. Do not make any assumptions as to, *I do not need to see this person*, because everyone would respond positively to an outreach.

I will say I am looking forward to ongoing flexibility when it comes to those persons who may have contracted the virus and have now recovered, because there is obviously some level of natural immunity. And I know that the science is a bit varied in terms of the degree to which a person who has recovered is immunised against catching COVID-19 again, but I am looking forward anyway to some more flexibility in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I am definitely no expert in this regard, but I am very conscious of a person's mental health, both in going through the COVID-19 experience . . . and when I say that I mean that if you or someone else has COVID-19 and you have to be quarantined, it is definitely a different feeling to be told that you must now remain virtually at home in a confined space. Irrespective of how, you know, your physical house is, it is a different mental thought process to go through, knowing that you have to remain in that physical space.

And so, I am saying that again because I want us all to be mindful of that, and for the general public to be aware of the fact that, again, I am not an expert in that field, but know that the Government is sensitive to a person's mental health and is still trying to maintain steps and approaches to ensure that mental health approaches are, in fact, addressed.

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to take the time to again emphasise my appreciation to the health professionals, broadly speaking. When I say health, I am speaking about everyone who is involved in the COVID-19 response, whether it be the Fire [and Rescue] Service, the hospital, the pure health workers that work at the hospital or, for example, in the Ministry of Health. But also, the Customs officers, Immigration and others who have to greet persons at the airport, go through the surveillance and all those kinds of

things, because there are many people who are part of this process.

I want to especially acknowledge though, the numerous young people who are involved in the strategy and the protocols and the fight against COVID-19. I continue to be amazed at the number of persons who are probably less than age 25 who respond, sometimes at a moment's notice, to come, whether it be to the airport or otherwise to greet flights, to sometimes take the swabs and others. And sometimes at [all] hours of the night, [and all] hours of the day. And I say that again because so often we have a narrative whereby young people are not doing what they should do.

There are so many more. And I want to encourage us to speak to the majority and not the minority. Yes, the minority are doing sometimes some crazy things, and sometimes what they do is so exceptional we have to speak to them. But the majority of our young people are doing positive things, and I want us to be sure that we encourage that.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Anthony Richardson: And so, I will conclude Mr. Speaker, by again saying to everyone I certainly wish persons a joyous Christmas, even in the context of whatever their personal circumstances are, and to know that no matter your personal circumstances, there are others who are in a worse case than yourselves. I do not say that to be flippant, but what I want us all to do is to take some time during this Christmas time of giving and do at least one thing for someone else, because we will all be surprised at how effective doing good for others impacts them, but also impacts ourselves.

As a very final comment, Mr. Speaker, my branch actually did a drive-by last week Saturday and we had Santa there. And as people drove by, I was watching them and looking at them as they drove by, and I was reminded of the fact that Santa still brings smiles to both adults and children. We expect it for children. But even for the adults, as they come by and as they are driving by, in that split second you can see they may a grimace or a frown on their face and when they see Santa, they smile. And for me, it was another indication that we can do small things to bring a smile to others' faces.

So, on that note again, Mr. Speaker, I wish you and your family a very merry Christmas. To all of the fellow Members of Parliament and to every resident and visitor in Bermuda, please enjoy Christmas and do something positive for someone else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

Any other Member?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes?

Mr. Vance Campbell: It is MP Campbell, but I would—

The Speaker: MP Campbell, you have your 20 minutes.

COVID-19—AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GOVERNMENT TO PAUSE AND RESET THE DIAL

Mr. Vance Campbell: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, on May 21 of this year in this Chamber, I referred to a May 11 article that contained a call to unity from two former Premiers of this country, Sir John Swan and the Honourable Alex Scott. Sir John said, “It is time for us to find the collective will as a country, as a people to work together and work together in collaboration in moving Bermuda forward.” The Honourable Alex Scott said, “It is our responsibility to bring everybody together with the object of solving problems. . . . If collectively we now focus on finding those solutions to the challenges we have today, we are not going to do too badly.”

Also, this year, Mr. Speaker, near the end of July, maybe the beginning of August, in this Chamber I used the Tour de France cycling race [as an example]. I spoke about how within the race there exists a series of individual competitions and team competitions. And, Mr. Speaker, I said while those individuals and the team competitions are going on those very individuals who are competing against each other and the teams that are competing against each other regularly find that they must work together in order to accomplish their personal goals and/or in order to put themselves in the best position to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the peloton and how due to aerodynamics of the group they can travel faster than an individual or a much smaller group.

But I also advised that if the peloton failed to organise, and what that means is fails to work together or fails to work together in time, it will not succeed in traveling faster. And the individual goals and [those of] the team will not be realised.

Mr. Speaker, I then brought the analogy of the Tour de France into a political context, stating that each of the 36 of us here in the House are part of two teams. We each have our individual goals, one of which was to win our seat. And we may each have individual goals beyond that. But we ran as part of two teams—i.e., our parties. And those parties each have their goals. The OBA have their goals, the PLP have our goals.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned how the ever-changing challenges we face as a country, and as a tourist and business jurisdiction can be equated to the changing terrain, the changing criteria and the weath-

er conditions that the riders face in the Tour de France. And like the peloton, Mr. Speaker, I stated that if both parties work together, we still will meet and successfully navigate through the challenges that we face as a country. But if we fail to do so or if we fail to do so in time, Bermuda will suffer. In other words, the consequences of the two parties not working together are more, way more serious, way graver than failing to win a race or an individual competition within a race.

Mr. Speaker, recently I had a conversation with Mr. Ed Williams, Jr. We were re-acquainting after not seeing each other for a long time. And during this conversation he made the statement that COVID-19 has provided us with the opportunity to pause, reset the dial and do things differently. Mr. Speaker, I ask my parliamentary colleagues as to whether we have. And I challenge them as to whether we are resetting the dial and doing things differently.

PLP, are we?

OBA, are you?

When your constituent, when my constituent asks, *Will I have a job? Will I be able to provide for my family? What kind of future will my children have?* Can we honestly say to them, *There is hope because we continue to reset the dial and that we are working together and doing things differently?*

What do you think, Mr. Speaker?

Earlier this week Mr. Patrick Tannock, Chairman of ABIC, CEO of XL Bermuda Ltd., stated, Mr. Speaker, that Bermuda needs to “shatter the misconception” that it is a place where capital “goes to hide” and reposition itself as a place where capital goes to grow. He also called for a unified effort in order to meet the demands of a changed world. Mr. Speaker, it does not appear that he believes we have reset the dial or that there is unity of purpose.

Mr. Speaker, to my party I ask, Do we have legislation coming in the near future to first attract more capital here, and second, create an environment that will facilitate its growth? Obviously, I am not talking about legislation that will cause damage to our jurisdictional reputation, Mr. Speaker. But we must [ask] again, how many investors have we lost, or lost out on because we moved too slowly? We are not responsive enough. Not like perhaps one of our competitor jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that many of our laws are antiquated. And in some space “antiquated” could mean five years old. In some areas things are moving that fast. We must loosen some of the restrictions on development within the city limits, Mr. Speaker, as an example. We must amend the laws pertaining to ownership dynamics of Bermuda companies to encourage external investment in Bermuda. Are we prepared to reset the dial and do things differently? Let us not be afraid of change, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of change, Mr. Speaker, I believe it was about two sessions ago that the Honourable Minister from constituency 12, Mr. Craig Cannonier, made

a statement and complained (and these are my words, not his, so I am just trying to convey the effect) about how much time we waste as legislators in certain long-standing processes. And I agreed with him then and I agree with him now. Two examples that we are obligated to go through that would fit that bill in my opinion are the Speech from the Throne and the entire budget process.

I am not saying that we should not go through an exercise around letting the public know what the Government of the day plans to do. I am not saying that we should not do an exercise to let the public know what we intend to spend. But we can do it so much better, so much more efficiently than the current process. And I believe there is a will on both sides of the aisle to do so, but once we start discussing it, it falls apart.

We have done a lot for workers' rights as a party. But I believe (and this is my personal opinion, Mr. Speaker) that there is a tipping point, and we must maintain the proper balance. Otherwise, it becomes too burdensome for existing businesses, and we may see businesses closing. Those looking in who may want to start up new businesses may be deterred because we have gone too far perhaps in trying to balance the scales between employer and employee.

Mr. Speaker, on the topic of immigration we have been advised and we are all well aware of how immigration has been used historically to maintain certain people in certain positions and to keep certain other people in their place, so to speak. But it is incumbent on us to educate our people in this area so that we better understand that immigration policies can be a positive tool. They can be used in a positive manner to encourage population growth and also to attract outside investment into Bermuda without being to the detriment of our existing population of Bermudians. We can turn that tap on, Mr. Speaker. And when our objectives are achieved, we can turn the tap off.

Mr. Speaker, there is no silver bullet that will turn our economy around. It will take many initiatives to improve our circumstances. And on that note I was pleased to see this week that SailGP will be returning in May. I quite like sailing particularly at that level. I stumbled upon the America's Cup in the 1980s by chance. And what caught my attention [was] I came home late from a night out, and as I always did I turned on the TV to look at whatever sports was on. I could not find anything except the America's Cup. This is we are talking the Dennis Conner days. And the commentator was saying one boat was behind 100 metres. And I am like, *No way! There's no way.* So they then gave you a different angle so you could see. And I was intrigued, and every night thereafter I turned on my TV to catch the next race.

But we will need many smaller initiatives to accomplish the turning-around of our economy. We can only best do that if we are working together.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the silver lining to COVID-19 is that it has provided us with the opportunity to pause, to reset the dial and to do things differently. Let us, the 36 of us, not waste this opportunity for the sake of our beloved country.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I wish my fellow MPs, the House Clerks, the Senators, my constituents and all of Bermuda a merry Christmas and safe holidays. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

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

The Speaker: Yes. Good evening. MP Lister, you have your 20 minutes.

IMPORTANCE OF TAKING TIME TO CARE FOR YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening to the listening public. Good evening to my fellow colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter into the end of this year I, and I hope others, will take time to reflect on the year that is soon to end, 2021. Reflect on the good, reflect on the bad and see how to progress and improve for the year to come. With that said, Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I had been forced to take time myself recently to stop and reflect.

Regular listeners to this House of Assembly may ask, *Why haven't I heard the representative from C-28 speak in a while?* Well, Mr. Speaker, I had to slow down and take time for myself due to personal health reasons. In this time of public health [challenges], we must not forget each and every one's own personal health, Mr. Speaker. I can say that now. As I said, I have been absent from this Honourable House for a while due to my personal health.

Mr. Speaker, while I may be over 30, in my mid-30s, I still consider myself of the under-30 age group, Mr. Speaker, because I still consider myself young, healthful, vibrant and full of life. But recently, Mr. Speaker, I have had to slow down. As I said, I was forced to slow down and step back from the public due to personal health issues, Mr. Speaker. But I want to say especially to young men and young women, but to everyone, take care of your personal health. Whether you may be young, whether you might be middle-aged or of the older age, Mr. Speaker, your health should always be number one.

So, as I said, Mr. Speaker, in this time with public health and there is so much going on, you must not forget and get lost in everything and forget about

taking care of yourself. You are *numero uno*; you are number one. Take care of you because if you do not take care of yourself, Mr. Speaker, who is there to take care of you? Yes, we have family. But you should always be taking care of yourself first, Mr. Speaker.

But as I change from health, Mr. Speaker, I do want to just in this time . . . and not just this time, but throughout the year. We so often overlook, and I want to give just a shout-out to, our first responders, our emergency workers. In my capacity as Road Safety Chairman, Mr. Speaker, so often we hear the news of an accident, a collision, this event. But we often forget to think about the first responders, the emergency workers who show up on the scene. And they have to manage and deal with the scene they come upon.

Again, so often we do not think about that side. We just hear about what has happened. So I want to give a *thank you* to all of the first responders and emergency workers not just in this year, but for all those who [during] the years gone past have been there, frontline first responders. I want to thank them for the work they do.

ROAD SAFETY REMINDERS

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, now I just want to end. And I hope in this message that I say, I hope that the public will heed it so that those first responders, emergency workers that I just spoke to, they will hopefully have a quiet, maybe even so a boring Christmas period and will not have to respond to any road collisions or accidents. Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Road Safety Chairman, I just want to send through this time, this Christmas period, this Christmas season, a time of cheer and giving, holiday and celebrating with family and loved ones. I just want to remind all of the motoring public . . . and not just the motoring public because we all share the roads, whether as pedestrians, whether as a passenger in a vehicle or on a bike. We all share our roads. So to all of the motoring public, I want to in this season [say], *Remember. Remember that your actions, however small you think your action is, it can have an impact on not just yourself but all of those around you on the road.*

So I want everyone to just take that time and remember to drive with care and caution, to always drive at the correct speed. Do not speed. And always remember not to drink and drive. Especially in this season there will be social events and celebrating. It is a time of celebration. So we can expect it. But what I want to say again to all of the motoring public is that if you plan to go out to a social event, a gathering, and you consume alcohol, plan ahead how you will get home. Whatever you have on hand, hire a taxi, if you get a group of friends, it could be a minibus. Under businesses, you have Hitch, you have Home Safe. And also the Road Safety Council, we want to implore you to not forget about using a designated driver. There are options so that when a person does go

out—yes, we want you to have fun and celebrate with your friends and family. But do it smartly and wisely and responsibly.

Plan how you will get home, not only to keep yourself safe, but to keep all other road users safe, because an accident can happen. And the person who is driving the vehicle may not get injured. But they can seriously injure someone else, an innocent bystander, just another person in another vehicle. So your actions that you make impact all of those around you.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So with that said, Mr. Speaker, again I want to remind all of the public to drive with care and caution. Do not speed. And do not drink and drive. And, Mr. Speaker, to my constituents of C-28 and to just all of Bermuda, I want to again in this time and season say season's greetings, merry Christmas and happy New Year! Enjoy this time of celebrating with friends and family. Make sure, because as I said, we have to take this time for our loved ones. Much has been said prior to [my speaking] tonight of this year and how we have been affected by COVID-19. So we have to share this time with our friends and our family, those whom we love.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you. And to all those in this House and those listening, again enjoy the season. Have a merry Christmas, and see you all in the New Year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. MP Adams, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you. I just wanted to confirm that my camera is on.

The Speaker: Yes, we see you. Yes.

PLP GOVERNMENT—DIVERSE, DISCIPLINED AND UNITED

Mr. Jache Adams: All right. Perfect.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to first begin by echoing the sentiment of my colleagues and wish you, all of my parliamentary colleagues and indeed the people of Bermuda a very, very happy and merry Christmas and season's greetings and the like. Mr. Speaker, I promise I will not be long this evening. But I just wanted to take an opportunity to say a few words.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Labour Party has a creed, which I am sure you are familiar with. It speaks to who we are as a party, so much so that we say it in all meetings and events. And that is, *PLP all the way! And all the way, PLP!* Mr. Speaker, notice I did not say *PLP some of the way*. I did not say *PLP as long as it is convenient for me*, or *PLP provided I get my way*. We say *all the way*, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks to the conviction, the attitude, the discipline required to get us to where we ultimately want to be.

I emphasise discipline because in an organisation as diverse as the Progressive Labour Party, tasked with governing a country with even greater diversity, it is impossible for everyone to get everything they want. So it takes discipline to accept losing a battle you are passionate about in order to stay united to ensure we win the war. Mr. Speaker, consensus does not mean that everyone agrees at the same level. The focus of consensus is to achieve a mutually acceptable level of agreement necessary to move forward.

I can tell you there is a Member of the party, very active and vocal, someone I have tremendous respect for, who is opposed to the regulation of cannabis. And I must say he makes a very, very strong argument. He had his say. He was heard, but ultimately understood the majority of the party felt differently. And so in unison we continued to march forward. Mr. Speaker, the brother knew and demonstrated that the party is bigger than any individual or any single issue. I know without question the brother is *PLP all the way*.

Mr. Speaker, I stood behind Minister Hayward as he faced his protestors. I wanted him to know that he was not alone, and also for the public to see and understand that Ministers do not make decisions by themselves. Let there be no mistake about it: The Minister and I do not agree on everything. But I support him as the Government put forth legislation that addressed the mixed status families, extended financial assistance eligibility for over 100 families, introduced a paid graduate trainee programme, increased protection for Bermudian entertainers, implemented a work from Bermuda programme which injected over \$23 million into the economy. I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but the point I am making is that whilst we do not agree on everything, we are on the same team with core values aligned, pursuing a similar vision for this country. And so for that he has my unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, words cannot express how proud I am of our Minister of Health, a lady who is without question battle-tested and exemplifies a strong Black woman. Minister Wilson has held the reins of a health care policy in the middle of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and continues to do a remarkable job.

Under her leadership, she secured sufficient testing when we needed it most, received in abun-

dance the top recommended vaccines, provided regularly scheduled stats and updates for the country and still found time to continue to move us toward universal health care. Mr. Speaker, I cannot even imagine the phone calls, the emails she receives, the toll each COVID-19 death has taken on her, the pressure she carries with her every single day. Mr. Speaker, it would be naïve of me and anyone else to assume the Minister would not make any mistakes along the way. But in those moments, I would not dream to say *I told you so* or to kick her when she was down. You see, we are on the same team, core values aligned, pursuing a similar vision for this country. So, for that she has my unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, six months ago I was invited to be the guest speaker at Heron Bay Primary graduation. It was significant to me because Heron Bay has a special place in my heart as both of my great-grandparents went to Heron Bay. My grandmother and her brothers went to Heron Bay. My mother and her sister went to Heron Bay. And yes, I, along with my brother and my cousin, went to Heron Bay as well. So I would be the first to tell you that it is painful to know the school is closing before I could send my daughter.

I have expressed my feelings to both the Premier and the Minister directly. But I understand the concept and importance of modernising the way we educate our students. And so I removed my personal feelings from the equation because the Minister and I are on the same team, with core values aligned, pursuing a similar vision for this county. And so for that Minister Rabain has my unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go down the laundry list of ministries, nor will I touch on the great things our MPs are doing in the communities. I wanted to spend a few minutes to remind those listening of an African proverb that says, "When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you." So to our Premier and party leader, as we manage through these unprecedented times, a time when many people are asking for resources when there is very little to give, a time when we are trying to defeat an invisible enemy that is constantly changing, a time when there are external factors threatening the state of our economy, time when we continue to pay for the former Government's bad deals—I stand with you and our entire team because I am *PLP all the way!*

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

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

Any other Member?

Any other Member?

Any other Member?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [*Gavel in hand*] Do you see what is in my hand?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes!

The Speaker: I have to say today we are going home early. Mr. Famous, you had better speak. You had better speak, Mr. Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am used to hearing that from my mom when she says, *See what I got in my hand?*

The Speaker: Yes. Well, I do have it in my hand again. The House is going home early.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I was trying to give the Opposition a chance to say *merry Christmas* to their voters. But it seems that they do not want to speak—

[*Crosstalk*]

The Speaker: Go ahead and say what you have got to say. If they wish to speak, they will speak. If they do not wish to speak, they do not wish to speak. It is your 20 minutes. Speak on what you want to speak on.

Mr. Christopher Famous: All right, Mr. Speaker. Can you see me clearly, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

REACHING OUT TO BERMUDIANS IN THE UK

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I just returned literally less than 24 hours ago from this place they call the United Kingdom, also the place that many may know colonised our people for 400 years. There are those who have this concept that the United Kingdom is the be-all to end-all. The United Kingdom knows everything. The streets are paved with gold, and Mary Poppins is just around every corner.

It is not the case, Mr. Speaker, really not the case. I will give you one prime example, Mr. Speaker, being as we are talking about COVID-19. I will not be long on COVID-19; I just want to illustrate a point. Two points. The United Kingdom Government under Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the people of United Kingdom not to wear a mask, Mr. Speaker. When he was at COP26 amongst all of the world leaders, he was the only one not wearing a mask, to demonstrate he does not care about wearing masks and his people should not wear masks. So, Mr. Speaker, millions of people in the United Kingdom walked around maskless. They went on trains with no masks. They went on buses with no masks.

Mr. Speaker, if you look on our buses, our buses have a little marker on every other seat saying,

Do not sit here, to allow for social distancing. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? In the public transportation system in the UK there is no social distancing. People are jammed up on buses and trains like sardines, literally.

Guess what happened, Mr. Speaker? People thought, *Oh, we're back to normal! We're the United Kingdom. We're the one who's colonised the whole world! We know better than everyone else.* But guess what, Mr. Speaker? Within a short period of time, the COVID-19 cases have shot up and the neighbouring European nations have been forced to implement lockdowns or curfews. So, guess what, Mr. Speaker? As of two weeks ago, they are now telling people, *Wear masks!* They are now telling people, *When you come back to England, you've got to take a PCR test!* Sounds familiar, does it not? That is the chaos that is going on in what is called the mother country, the people who are supposed to be smarter than everybody else, Mr. Speaker.

But there is also an example, point two, that what our Minister of Health has been telling people, what our Premier and so many others have been instructing our people to do, we were always on the right path. We did not follow the UK into their chaos. So for those who want to say, *Hey, relax the regulations. Be like the UK!*, well, guess what? The UK is realising they need to be like Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on. During my trip I got to meet a number of Bermudians studying in the UK. One young man from Devonshire who is studying hospitality is one year away from getting his Master's Degree in Hospitality Management. He is looking forward to working in the hotels that under our Premier, the Minister responsible for Tourism, we have just made concessions for. Now, when people hear *concessions*, they go like, *Oh, the hotels are getting this, the hotels are getting the other.* The reality is that we are facing worldwide competition. Unfortunately, if we do not give concessions, these hotels will go elsewhere. And that young man and many other Bermudians who want to work in hospitality—as MP Caesar says, *Service is not servitude*—will not have a job.

Mr. Speaker, I met another young lady who changed from working in international business, a very successful career in international business, and now she is studying climate change. I met with her. I talked with her, and she was so proud that Bermuda, under Deputy Premier Walter Roban, is leading the Overseas Territories in climate change mitigation. We cannot change the climate. But we can do what we can to clean up our own backyard. And Bermuda is one of the leaders. That young lady, who is coming home in January–February, said she is looking forward to working with the government in a private capacity to help our climate.

Another young man I met, Mr. Speaker, 25 years old. He is this far away from getting his doctorate in nuclear engineering. These are people that we need to be proud about, Mr. Speaker. A PhD in nucle-

ar engineering. He expressed his pride in the infrastructure changes that are going on in this country because, from a nuclear engineering point of view, we probably will never have a nuclear reactor here. But he sees those infrastructure changes that are going on in regard to sewage and so on, water treatment, water supply. He is very proud of that.

He expressed pride in the fact that we are now getting 30 electric buses under the leadership of Minister Lawrence Scott and his team at the Ministry of Transport. Most other islands do not even have public transportation. And those that do have public transportation, none of them have electric buses. So once again we are leading.

Mr. Speaker, there are those in Bermuda and not in Bermuda who would like to detract from the work that this Government is doing locally and internationally. Mr. Speaker, I can unequivocally say I have seen for myself the respect that international leaders have for the work that Minister of Finance, Honourable Curtis Dickinson, is doing in his space. We are challenged financially. But when they see what this gentleman and his team, the Financial Secretary, Ms. Cheryl-Ann Lister, and others are doing, they are amazed. I have seen it. I have sat down in rooms and seen people amazed at what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I have also seen how Premier Burt, the President of the United Kingdom Overseas Territory Association rallied 13 Colonies of the United Kingdom to stand together to get greater access for all of their people in so many different ways. He would elaborate more, but I am just telling you that on an international level our leaders who get ridiculed at home for silly little stuff are highly respected. And none of this could happen without . . . at least in the UK, the dedicated hard-working staff of Bermuda's London Office.

I personally want to give thanks to Ms. Kimberley Durrant, Ms. Carol Francis, Mr. Ratteray who is from Somerset, and Mr. Jordan Scott-Furtado for their tireless work on behalf of Bermudians. Many Bermudians living in the UK always refer to the help that they get from Bermuda's London Office.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that anyone who canvasses knows that when we go to knock on doors (we have names on a list) you are going to find, *Oh, so-and-so doesn't live here anymore*. So you think, *Okay. Where have they moved to? Did they go anywhere in the parish?* The answer is many of those people have gone to the UK. Right now we are looking at at least 3,000 Bermudians in the UK. That is roughly 5 per cent of our population. Some have gone for studies, so they will be coming back. Some have gone for work experience, so they will be coming back. Some have gone over there because they are married to someone from the UK. They are not coming back. Some have gone for athletic exposure such as some of our young men playing football, Mr. Justin Donawa as a prime example, Nahki Wells, Milan But-

terfield, Kane Crichlow. One is [in the] ballet, Ms. [Arielle] Ming, granddaughter of Henry [PHONETIC] and Conchita Ming. She is excelling in London in ballet.

The reality is that we do not have a wide enough field for their talents so they have to live abroad. We have to applaud them. However, Mr. Speaker, there are some Bermudians who simply move away because the cost of living is too high. The cost of trying to purchase our homes is too high. We heard from the Honourable Minister Tinee Furbert talking about some of the fees a bank is going to impose. But the biggest fee that is hitting us is mortgage fees. That is why many Bermudians, professionals who have an education, cannot afford to buy a house here. They cannot afford the mortgage rates that some banks are pressing upon them. That is the reality. And people would say, *Oh, it's the Government*. The Government cannot dictate to the banks what their mortgage rates are. That is the unfortunate reality.

So, Mr. Speaker, our people are there, but we cannot forget them. When we venture down to the road to universal health under Minister Wilson, it is to protect our people. When we strive to make housing affordable under Colonel Burch, it is to protect our people. When we put more money into sports under Minister Peets, it is to protect our people. When we put in stronger labour laws under Minister Jason Hayward, it is to protect our people. And when we reform education, warts and all, under Minister Diallo Rabain, it is to protect our people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me close here. We cannot be a nanny-state. We cannot do everything for the people. Our people have to stand up on their own, take advantage of the doors that we are opening up for them and make their way in an ever-changing world, Mr. Speaker. In the UK everything is on an app now. You want groceries? Just push an app. They will deliver the groceries to your house. That is coming to Bermuda or it is already here. You want anything—anything you want . . . Let me just be clear. Anything legal that you want on an app, you can get on an app in England. (Yes, I see you, Brother. I see you!)

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: You can get on that app. Right? Because I know that the RG [Royal Gazette] would like to sound-click me.

Anyway, that is coming to Bermuda. We cannot stop companies from putting their services on an app. We cannot stop companies from trying to figure out a way to save on labour costs. But we have to get our people to think of how are they going to be part of that process?

FinTech is coming, Mr. Speaker. In spite all of the noise of the OBA four years ago, cryptocurrency is not going anywhere. I have seen the leaders in the cryptocurrency space sit down with our Premier and

be amazed with his knowledge. People ask him questions thinking he will not know the answers; he knew 10 steps ahead of them. Cryptocurrency is going nowhere, Mr. Speaker. Our people must be ready for that revolution. It is only so much we can do.

Mr. Speaker, let me close here. I encourage each one of my fellow . . . the other 35 MPs, including you, Mr. Speaker, the 11 Senators . . . I encourage you all to find out who in your constituency or constituencies you would like to be in are now living in the UK. Everybody has got family still here. Over the next few months, get a phone number for them. If they want it, call them up and just say, *Hey, this is MP So-and-so. I know you're in England. But I just want you to know that we're thinking about you, and we don't want you to think you're forgotten.* Because many people in England, they have not heard from a Bermudian in a long time. They have not seen or heard from their immediate families. They think that we have forgotten about them. But I want them to know we have not forgotten about them.

Mr. Speaker, I close here, and I say this: 2022 is a few days away. Making useless resolutions is pointless. We all have a better path to take. As MP Campbell said, we have to work as a team. If the Opposition want to snipe at us for little, small little things, *Oh, this figure seems [INAUDIBLE].* People do not care about what they have got to say. They want results whether it is from us or from the Opposition. And we have to plan individually as MPs to do better in our constituencies. Go visit the people who are not seen as much. You know whom you have not seen. Go visit them. Call them up.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close here. Thank you for the opportunity to let me speak every week. I missed it two weeks ago. But you have a good Christmas, and I will see you on the other side, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, MP.

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

An Hon. Member: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: MP Simmons, you have been sitting here in front of me on the screen for a while. So I will give you your 20 minutes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I am sorry to subject you to my face for that long, sir.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: No. No problem.

MP'S EXPRESSION OF THANKS TO THE PEOPLE OF CONSTITUENCY 33

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So I would like to start where MP Tyrrell started because a few weeks ago I celebrated my seventh anniversary as a Member of Parliament representing constituency 33 for the Progressive Labour Party. Before that time, though . . . well, this is my second political life. I do not really talk about it that much. I sometimes like to pretend it never happened. But there was another time I sat in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, under a different banner. And I am appreciative for the second chance that I have been given, the second chance that the Progressive Labour Party gave me to serve our community.

I am thankful for the Honourable Dr. Ewart Brown, who reached out to me and encouraged me and let me know that there would be a place for me in the Progressive Labour Party. I am appreciative to Dame Jennifer Smith, who took me out and literally taught me, re-taught me everything I know about canvassing. And I am so grateful to so many other of my colleagues such as Christopher Famous, who has helped, assisted and guided me along the way. Seven years. If you had asked me 10 years ago if I would be sitting in this place, I would have said, *No way. I will never be in Parliament.* I just did not see it happening.

And the story that will be told one day of how I ended up becoming the representative is an interesting one because I certainly was not the first choice or the second choice or the third choice or the fourth choice or even the eighth choice. And for that I am very grateful to our then-Leader, the Honourable Marc Bean. So even though he is no longer with the Progressive Labour Party, he saw value in me and gave me the opportunity and supported me. So for that I will be grateful.

Mr. Speaker, there is a song that starts out by saying, "So this is Christmas. And what have we done? Another year over And a new one just begun." And in the seven years, plus the time before that, every Christmas we all gather and we say the same things essentially. We encourage the public to go out and do better. We exhort each other to do better. And I am looking forward to the Christmas when we do not have to make those speeches anymore because we do this all year round as a community and as a people.

You know, we have been taught to look down on people for being poor. We do not like to admit it. But we have. When somebody is struggling, when somebody is suffering, we have been taught that there is something they have done, that it may be their fault. We sometimes do not take the opportunity to think about the person who came to work every day, made time, did what they were supposed to do but got made redundant. You do not think about the person who had money deducted from their pay cheque every month for their health insurance who, when illness hit,

had no health insurance and was suddenly stuck with a huge bill. They are now in debt. There is nothing they could have done to have prevented that.

So before we judge, before we castigate, before we look down, before we use people as props to show how charitable we are, let us take a moment to recognise the humanity in some of our people who have been victimised by the system, who have been victimised by the economy, who have been victimised by racism, who have been victimised by institutional structures that continue to oppress and destroy Bermudians, many of whom are doing what they are supposed to.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there will always be a place for personal responsibility. There will always be a place for personal accountability. But beyond that we must also acknowledge the fact that too many of our people are doing what they are supposed to, and they are still struggling. So, I am asking today, for Christmas, let us work toward a Christmas when we do not have to give these speeches about *Be kind to each other* and *take care of each other* and *do something nice*. Let us go toward a Bermuda where we are doing that all the time and we do not have to say that.

But also let us have an honest talk with ourselves. Are we as compassionate and understanding and generous to those whom we see every day who are worse off than us? Have we remembered the old adage, *There but for the grace of God, go I?*

So, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I am grateful to those who have helped along the way. And I want to take a special moment to thank the people of constituency 33 and my branch for the support that they have given me. And no man is an island. And as I move, they move. And they have been a tremendous gift and a tremendous resource and a tremendous help for me.

I wish each and every one of you a happy holiday, a wonderful New Year, and please be safe. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP. I like that nice, short, sweet message and right to the point.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I hate the sound of my voice. I do not want to talk all night.

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

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

The Speaker: MP Swan.

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

The Speaker: Good evening.

VISIONS FOR TOURISM AND INWARD INVESTMENT

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I would like to start off by bringing greetings of the season to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all colleagues of this Honourable Chamber, the Legislature and the very good staff of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by thanking the Premier for giving me some particular responsibilities over the past year. And the three specific responsibilities as a Backbencher, one with tourism, which is a lifelong passion. I am on the BTA [Bermuda Tourism Board]. One is my lifelong passion, which is golf, to be chairman of Government golf courses. And the other one which he gave me responsibility, but no money, was that for forts. Because I have been talking about the restoration of forts for so long on the radio and stuff, he said, *Well, you can have some jurisdiction over forts*. So, I have a vision; just looking for some money. And I am looking as I play golf myself, Mr. Speaker, coming in contact with persons in this world of very high net worth.

I am also sharing the vision that exists in my heart for some restoration in our country that could be of benefit, because all of the money that government has is not enough for what we need to do. We need to create and encourage some inward investment. And we have to do that ourselves, too, Mr. Speaker, not only the Finance Minister. Those of us in our places of influence must see the value of getting folks from outside to imminently invest in our country. We do not print money. We do not have the industry apart from international business that can create the amount of money to prop up our dollar. We need to get foreign currency into this country. And that is ever so important.

And in my space in representing the Bermuda Tourism Authority, I just want to say how much, Mr. Speaker, I have appreciated working with the Honourable Wayne Caines, who is Chairman of that Authority. Mr. Speaker, my uncle Herman "Tucci" Bascome taught me how to observe persons who are very talented in my trade, and I have carried that on in all that I do. And when I see somebody who can do good work, I look and observe how they operate. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with this young gentleman as he serves the community in a different space as the chairman of a quango. And I am pleased with the new CEO, Mr. Charles Jeffers, the son, who is getting settled in in his role, and his team, Mr. Speaker.

I know I listened to, even the Premier made a quip this week about the autonomy of the BTA. The Act allows it to be somewhat autonomous. But it does provide for the Minister to give directions. And the Ministers usually does not give many directions in the course of the operations of quangos, but there are occasions when they do give direction. I am mindful of

that, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, in the carrying out of my responsibilities in the quangos and the autonomous authorities that I am involved in, I always try to be mindful of the spirit of the Act and the authority of the Act. And when those directions are put forward, I certainly recognise that and make sure that others who may not be quite as mindful as myself recognise it.

I am very pleased to see initiatives such as the PGA Golf Bermuda Championship. This is a global event that brings us tremendous awareness overseas, brand awareness. SailGP will do likewise, Mr. Speaker. I just happen to come from a family who loves the ocean. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, my family comes from Somerset Bridge in Scour. And we are a boating people very much like my St. David's family and my St. George's family. We are all boating people. So I come from two boating communities. And we are appreciative in the boating community of St. George's to have a marina as coming forward in a very concrete promise to be completed, a date in 2022 to be completed. And that certainly allows us to build on the foundation of having now a hotel in St. George's. And I am sure the formation of that had its ups and downs, but it is here. It is amongst us. It is in our community.

And with the golf course, something near and dear to my heart, that I came to St. George's in 1985 to open a golf course. I know the value of having those types of added amenities and products. It is not the be-all and end-all. But when you have more products/services to offer, it makes your communities and your market a lot more attractive. So enhancing that hotel, there certainly will be a casino at some point in time. And I know it is not a matter for the Government to determine when that will happen; it is something for the independent Regulatory Authority to put forward. But we are looking with anticipation because the cruise ships that come here have that same product on their ships.

Anyone knows the cruise ship, Mr. Speaker, that has 1,500 people on it—1,500 people are not in the casinos. It may only be just a small sampling of persons. But the amenities that go around it, the nightclubs and the shows that take place, are all part of providing a product that can make an area destination or a community destination more attractive. We have seen the BTA do those initiatives with the experience initiatives. Ms. Tashae Thompson, the new Director of Experiences, is very passionate about that in her team, making sure that there are more experiences locally. I mean, even up in my homeland of Somerset Bridge, where [INAUDIBLE] participates in that. And in my adopted homeland in St. George's down at White Horse, they have participated successfully in that.

Those are the types of initiatives that we need to jumpstart in greater abundance around the community. And when I talk about the forts and the resto-

ration of forts, the fortresses that we have can form part of that, because we have got to invest in our infrastructure. So I have a responsibility. I have a mandate. I am letting you know that I do not have the money yet. And I am not only relying on Government for the money. I am going to be talking to my billionaires who come to play golf as I share the vision with them and see how we can find some partnerships that might be able to be beneficial, even in a philanthropic way, to our community.

And let's look at it—the fortresses that we have up and down our country. If you start at Alexander Battery Gates Fort, if you go to Fort George Hill, if you go to Martello Tower, if you go out to Castle Island, if you go up to Devonshire Bay up into Devon Fort up on top in Fort Hamilton, if you go to Whale Bay Battery, if you go to Fort Scour, if you go to many of the others, they are strategically located. And they could provide great gift shops, bathrooms, stop-offs for the minibuses. Because like it or not the cruise ships, although an air passenger spends six times more than a cruise passenger, or maybe seven by this time, there is an opportunity to grow that spend that takes place by having more services that would appeal to those cruise ship passengers.

So, if you do not have something that is going to cause someone to reach into their pockets, do not expect their spend to increase. If you have got 300,000 to 400,000 people coming on cruise ships, to me with my country mind from Hog Bay level, it seems to me that it makes more sense to find more ways to cause more people to spend \$10 here and \$10 there. Rather than waiting for them to pull out \$70 or \$80 for a shirt in my golf shop, they can go and spend \$10 at the fort up there, whatever parish you have the fort, and whatever mom-and-pop shop is there to sell them refreshments, whatever little souvenir place is there to sell them a souvenir of Bermuda, arts and crafts.

Usually, they will have nice decks. Chances are they are usually built like a ship. They have a top deck where they can have a nice lounge and sit-off. And if they are situated close to a beach, they can have some showers and the like, Mr. Speaker.

I am talking vision here. I am talking purpose for improving the infrastructure. Not just to cut the trees down and let them grow back in the fort, but to restore the forts for a modern purpose that serves [Bermuda]. And in it could be a mini-museum that tells the story of a community. I am going to pick on Whale Bay Battery because if you tell the military story, you could also tell the story of Mr. Frashai Bascome and his offspring who come from there and all of the Pitts and the Santucci and the Smiths. And Herman "Tucci" Bascome, the great golfer. You can tell the story of the communities that these forts sit in. You can tell the story of Louis Rafael Corbin up (and I should know this; my property borders this) at the top of Fort George Hill, and the stories of how people used to sometimes sleep in the fort because they could not

play golf during the day. They had to play at the crack of dawn, Mr. Speaker.

So as we integrate our history while providing a cultural experience for persons, we can use these fortresses for a modern day experience that allows us to capture the history. You know, this morning you heard the Minister of Education come with an initiative that is going to capture and put the history in a better place. What a wonderful initiative that is, Mr. Speaker! You know, Mr. Speaker, I cannot leave tonight without speaking about the responsibility that has been bestowed upon me, upon golf. And I am ever so grateful because the timing in life is everything.

And I just want to thank the Premier for that opportunity to use my experience in life and golf and around the world for the benefit of this country. But I could not do it alone, Mr. Speaker. I am just going to take the opportunity to say thank you to trustee LaMel Burch. Thank you to trustee Allen DeSilva. Thank you to trustee Deputy Chairman Vincent Hollinsid. Thank you to trustee Ianthia Butler. Thank you to trustee Senator Owen Darrell. Thank you to MP Jason Hayward. Thank you to Mr. Denton Outerbridge. And thank you to Mr. Quinton Ming. And thank you to Xaviar James. And thank you to Ms. Verneil Simons, our secretary; Mr. Steven Lambert, Jr.; and all of the staff; and our acting manager still, but now the substantive golf pro in his new role.

I thank them for the amount of service that they have provided over this past season, Mr. Speaker, over this past year to deal with some weighty issues for the good of this country and for the good of the game that has played such an integral part in our tourism product.

And yes, I heard MP Richardson from Smith's speak earlier about tennis. Yes, sports tourism is very important. Tennis is an integral part. We introduced tennis to the United States. There is a connection there that the Bermuda Tourism Authority has now acted upon and [can] use as a way to be at the US Open. We should be there. And we should be in every school in America telling them our connection with America that dates back to the 1600s. We need to let our awareness be known in every school place in America, because that is a major trading partner for us in many ways. So there should not be any confusion between Barbuda or Bahamas or whatever country that begins with B. They should all know Bermuda for good reason. We saved the starving nation at the infancy of its origins!

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is up to us to tell our stories. And, Mr. Speaker, let me say this. I am ever so grateful that we have a Commission of Inquiry into land grabs. And there is more to be told about that. They have just scratched the surface! Do not let anybody go away from here today thinking, Mr. Speaker, that that Commission that dealt with Tucker's Town is the be-all and end-all. Let me say here that there is a lot more that needs to be told about that, Mr. Speaker.

A lot more. And I am ever so grateful for those who serve, so grateful for the chairman and that team of commissioners. And some even had to endure times when they were in ill health and had to do it during a period when they could not even meet because we were going through COVID-19.

And let me say this, for anybody who is going to come at any point in time and say, *Oh, but you spent \$1 million*. Let me say this to anybody, Mr. Speaker, on that subject. One plot of land in that community would cost \$1 million! Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: When you talk about Tucker's Town, one plot of land today would sell and pay for that report, for the time of which it took to compile what was done at that time with the help of the Governor of the day at that particular time! There may have been some governors who came after. That Gascoigne and Hood I know because my uncle used to tell me about them, how they played golf and the like. But that was done. It was a blessing. And some of the names that come out in association with that make some families feel very uncomfortable.

But it is incumbent upon those families to look back at the history and provide us with some of the information so that we can go forward collectively, Mr. Speaker, as a people! You cannot go forward as a people if you hide from the truth. My friends, Black and white in this world, are proud of their history! Every community, every ethnic group in this world is proud of their history. We cannot be proud of our history because much of it is kept from us, Mr. Speaker. And most of us are intertwined. I tell people in St. George's when they say, *You're from Somerset Bridge?* I said, *My great-great-grandmother was a Higginbotham!* Go to St. Peter's Church and look on the wall and you will see the name. She had a daughter named Emily Burrows who married into cousin Reggie's family. That is my family. We all [have] got some intertwining. Not all of us, but most of us in this country are joined at the hip, Mr. Speaker.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I am winding up. I just want to say this. This is the Christmas season. I am of the Christian faith, Mr. Speaker. There are many faiths in our world. There are many different denominations. The common denominator that ties us all together, Mr. Speaker, is the greatest gift God gave us all. That is love, Mr. Speaker. Let love be the common denominator of this season. Let love be the reason why we make some decisions going forward in our family lives and our community lives and in our political lives and in our business lives, Mr. Speaker. So, no matter what walk of life we come from, no matter what faith we choose, Mr. Speaker, let us get together around the brotherhood of our communities in the spirit of love and lift those who are having difficulty at this time.

To you and yours, Mr. Speaker, have a [merry Christmas]. That is my contribution.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, MP.

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

Minister Hayward.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Minister Hayward, you have your 20 minutes.

PLP GOVERNMENT'S ETHOS CENTRED ON SUPPORTING THE WORKING-CLASS

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you for allowing me to provide an intervention in tonight's motion to adjourn. Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you and your family season's greetings, and certainly I hope that you have a prosperous New Year. To the residents of Bermuda, I wish you the same, and to my political colleagues I wish you the same.

Mr. Speaker, as I reflect on the year I had in this role as the Minister of Labour for this gem of an Island we call Bermuda, it has been somewhat bitter-sweet because I have been on the front end of many of the challenges that members of this population face, whether it is individuals being displaced from the workforce, whether it is persons who need additional financial support or whether it is assisting families to remain together through provisions we are making within our immigration laws. It has certainly not been easy when you are an empathetic individual, and sometimes we can feel the pain of those who require our assistance.

But it highlights the importance of the job that we do as politicians, our having a human, sensitive approach, our putting people first in terms of making our deliberations. The work that we do, not [doing it in] vain, but actually understanding that it impacts people's lives in a very meaningful way.

So, Mr. Speaker, I first would like to say that something disappointed me today. What I saw was a glorified PR stunt from the Opposition in terms of laying the Equity Bill. We have struggled with inequalities in this country for some time. And to see what was laid today was somewhat disappointing, to capture a headline in the newspaper. Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Labour Party is a party that actually is there to advance working-class persons within this country. I always keep that in mind in terms of what we aim to do and what we aim to accomplish. I always ensure that the proper policy work is done behind the initiatives we put in place so that we can actually benefit the people who actually require our assistance.

There is no doubt that the pandemic, the health care crisis, has translated into an economic crisis where we have seen a contraction of jobs within

this economy, which means we have seen displaced income from Bermudians who actually need it. And those individuals are coming to the Government for assistance. And we have done well and the best we possibly can to provide social protections for those individuals. I think of our charities and our third sector, who actually have also worked hard to support those individuals. But it should not be lost on anybody that this Government has provided unemployment benefits, has provided supplemental unemployment benefits, has [taken steps to] ease the process for persons to get on financial assistance.

There was another thing that we did in this Honourable House, and that was extending financial assistance from five years to seven years. That provided additional benefits for two years to over 100 families, Mr. Speaker. Had we not done that, Mr. Speaker, where would we be? Today as it pertains to those families, what type of Christmas would they be having? What type of new year would they be entering if we did not provide that support for food, housing, clothing, health care?

We want to talk about . . . we want to see equity and reduce inequality. Then our actions have to demonstrate that, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that this Government's actions have been human-centred. Our actions have demonstrated that we are trying to reduce the inequalities in our society, that we are trying to support individuals by providing social protections and social safety nets.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has tried to help over 500 Bermudians through the Department of Workforce Development to get some type of skill set training, help them with employability skills so they can get back into the job market. That is with limited resources and strained human resources as a result of the stop-and-start of our economy because of the pandemic. But we did not waiver in our commitment to the people of Bermuda in their time of need. And I was pleased to see that in *The Bermudian* magazine, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Workforce Development was actually voted for having the best government services. The people of Bermuda recognise that this department is going above and beyond, and I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Workforce Development for all that they have done.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter 2022, it is important for us as a Government to ensure that we have some type of statutory minimum wage in place. It is vital, Mr. Speaker, because the low wages in Bermuda are locking some of our people out of employment opportunities.

Also, we have huge abuses taking place in the labour market. One MP already touched on where employers are not paying their statutory benefits, where there is deduction for employees, but they are not paying those benefits. Mr. Speaker, the week before last in this House I highlighted that this was a matter that we would look at when we get into the tri-

partite group of the Labour Advisory Council. It is important that we have proper protections in place to ensure that employers are adequately paying their employees, that they are not taking deductions that are not agreed to, that when they do take deductions, they are submitted to the proper agencies. We need to do a better job at protecting our employees, Mr. Speaker. And that is one of the initiatives that the Government will take up in the new year.

This pandemic has also showed us that we need a more sustainable income replacement scheme. So, the Ministry of Labour will be working with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that at least our unemployment insurance fund is set up and that we have the scheme in place so that when persons are displaced from the workplace, they know that they have an income replacement waiting for them.

Mr. Speaker, we have tried our best. We have tried as best as we possibly can to leverage immigration as a tool to support economic growth and the expansion of jobs in the economy. I have already spoken in this House about the Economic Investment Certificate. And the certificates that were actually issued have generated over \$32 million in direct investment in Bermuda, in the Bermudian economy. I am pleased to report that this number now is closer to \$44 million in the Bermudian economy. This is where we see the policies that we put in place having a direct benefit in our society.

That success can also be shared with the one-year Work from Bermuda policy, where there has been over \$23 million of economic benefit to the country. And, Mr. Speaker, while they trickle in, those applications continue to come in. I would like to thank both the BTA [Bermuda Tourism Authority] and the BDA [Bermuda Business Development Agency] who are doing the work to promote these particular initiatives. But it is important that we progress in these areas, Mr. Speaker. It is important that we do things to keep families together in Bermuda.

I thank MP Caines for bringing the mixed status family legislation and ushering it through Parliament. I had the pleasure to enact the legislation. And already we are seeing much benefit to connecting families and ensuring that families remain together. We have removed the affidavit of domicile requirement for individuals born overseas to Bermudian parents, so that they can obtain Bermudian status. There is more that we have to do in that particular area, Mr. Speaker, to assist Bermudians who are repatriating back home.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly do not want to see our young people going away to school, getting an education and then determining that they want to remain off-Island. We certainly cannot afford that brain drain, especially with our ageing population. And we know that there is going to be a greater demand for jobs than the local supply can support. Mr. Speaker, MP Famous touched on Bermudians going overseas

to live. We need to ensure that we provide opportunities so that those individuals can come back home and flourish in their home country.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard as it pertains to having persons understand the benefits of converting long-term residents to permanent [residents] in Bermuda and the economic benefit this can provide. The human side of it will be to ensure that individuals are not separated from their children and that persons who have contributed to our economy can continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen an increased number of individuals looking to reside in Bermuda on an annual basis because this is a relatively safe jurisdiction as it pertains to the pandemic. We have extended visitor stays, and we welcome both short-term residents and visitors to the Island because they generate economic activity in a time when our tourism has taken a hit. Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are human-centred initiatives. These initiatives ultimately work to support the working-class people of Bermuda.

I spoke about the Department of Workforce Development and the assistance that is actually provided to job seekers. But we have also facilitated in this time of employment contraction [the success of] 470 unemployed Bermudians getting gainfully employed through the Workforce Development referral system. Mr. Speaker, we are now on our second cohort of graduate trainees. This is providing internships for young Bermudians who have a degree, who are locked out of the job market. Next year we will roll out our youth employment strategy in earnest. We recognise that there are barriers and impediments to employment for our young people. And we want to ensure that we put our best foot forward to get our young, talented, bright Bermudians placed in employment opportunities so that they can begin careers.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked extremely hard. We have maintained some employment despite the pandemic. We have maintained our scholarship funding despite the pandemic. We have seen an increase in students heading up to the Bermuda College and taking advantage of the financial assistance that we provide to those individuals. Mr. Speaker, we are trying our best to put people on pathways to success, a human-centred approach, supporting working-class people and working-class families.

Labour and labour party is not just a title, Mr. Speaker. The Progressive Labour Party represents an ethos, an ethos centred on supporting working-class persons. And we will continue in that vein.

But when we talk about *progressive*, [look at] the changes that we have made in terms of employment policies and changes to the Employment Act—very much progressive, Mr. Speaker. The requirements for every organisation to have a bullying and sexual harassment policy—very progressive, Mr. Speaker. The ILO [International Labour Organization] Convention 190, “Eliminating Violence and Harass-

ment in the World of Work,” is action-conscious to do exactly what Bermuda has done, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased that when I attended the Caribbean Labour Ministers meeting, I can boast of what Bermuda has done while others are still grappling with this problem. Extension of bereavement leave, ensuring that persons are treated fairly in the workplace, ensuring that persons are receiving meal breaks. Mr. Speaker, you are going to see further advances to the Employment Act.

I know one colleague said earlier that there needs to be balance. And sometimes we are moving ahead with progressing the rights of employees over those of employers. But if we as a Progressive Labour Party do not look out for the best interests of employees, then who will, Mr. Speaker? What were we elected for?

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be the Minister of Labour forever. But while I am here and I have this responsibility that I have been entrusted with by the people of this country, I will ensure that we put our best foot forward to support the working-class people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, we have enhanced the scrutiny of foreign work permit applications contrary to what some may believe. [We have] called employees and asked them, *How was your interview experience?* [To confirm] whether or not what was articulated on the sheet was actually what they had said we asked them to justify why a Bermudian who looks—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Member, you have got five seconds. I did not realise the time had run out.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —to be qualified is good enough.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken for 20 minutes, and I cannot finish?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And I cannot finish?

The Speaker: Well, you have—

Hon. Jason Hayward: The initiatives that this party has put in place for working-class people—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: We appreciate your contribution, and we can end on a good note. We will let you start off there when we come back in the new year. How is that?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: And have yourself a good holiday season. Good.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: You know, I can speak, Mr. Speaker. Or I can ask for more time if you want.

The Speaker: I think we need the Premier to speak.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, because you know I will be the last speaker for 2021.

The Speaker: You had your chance. The clock is yours.

Hon. E. David Burt: You already started the clock?

The Speaker: The clock is yours. You have got your 20 minutes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up where the youngest Member of Cabinet left off. I remember there was a time when I was the youngest person in the room. But the Honourable Minister of Labour said that—

The Speaker: Well, I can remember a time when I used to say that, Mr. Premier.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: How do you like that one?

Hon. E. David Burt: Ah, Mr. Speaker. So it is. Yes, you were younger than me when you went to the House. There is no question about that. You were in your 20s, right? You were 29, correct?

The Speaker: A young fellow when I went in.

PLP GOVERNMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Hon. E. David Burt: There, you see? That is how it goes. Yes. I know my history.

But, Mr. Speaker, picking up where the Honourable Minister just left off, because he basically said that he spoke for 20 minutes and he does not have enough time to speak about the things of which are being done for our working people. And he is right, Mr. Speaker. But the thing is that times are really hard. And it has been, I would say, quite a year. And as we look back on this year, whether it be the waves of the coronavirus that the country has had to endure, the significant losses, whether from this virus or others which we have had in this community, and when we

look to the fact that our economy Bill remained challenged for some time, that is why it is vital that the Government use the power that it has to make this economy fairer, to make this economy more just and to ensure that we are doing right by the people whom we serve.

So as we look back on this last legislative year, there certainly have been significant accomplishments legislatively inside of this Honourable Chamber, things of which we have advanced or pushed forward to better the conditions of our people. But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that there is a significant amount of more work to be done. And we cannot get past the fact that this work would be—I do not want to use the word “easier,” Mr. Speaker—but there could be more energy put toward change if we were not challenged with the elephant in the room. And that is the significant amount of energy and efforts on all sides, whether it be Education, whether it be Finance, whether it be Labour, whether it be Health, whether it be Cabinet Office or whether it be Transportation in dealing with the pandemic.

And that is why it is so vitally important that we do whatever we can to move beyond the pandemic and adjust our approach, because we have to adjust to living with this virus. And that is what 2022 is going to be. The thought that, you know at the beginning of 2020, that we would still be focused and having so much energy put toward the coronavirus in 2022 is certainly a challenge. But that is what we have. And we have to balance that, Mr. Speaker, because our economy must grow. Our economy must recover. And it is never a good thing to be in a place where at the end of the year when you want to give hope for the future you must speak about the fact that our economy will continue to be challenged into 2022.

And recognising, though now we have seen some growth in tourism, we know that tourism will not be back in full swing until at least 2023. We are hopeful for a relatively full cruise ship season next year, but certainly on the air arrival side we are going to continue to remain challenged. Then there is going to be another thing which is going to impact us, and that is going to be the issue of inflation, something that I spoke about when I spoke at the PLP Delegates Conference.

I just want to take an aside there, Mr. Speaker, and speak about this because yesterday there was a release from the Leader of the Opposition. And [there was] nothing in Parliament today about the issue, nothing in regard to questions, nothing in regard to the motion to adjourn. Almost like, you know, [INAUDIBLE] the press, knowing that the *Royal Gazette* will print it and will not ask for a response from the Government before it goes up. But I am actually stunned that the Opposition Leader would attack the officials in the Department of Statistics and call into question their integrity as if in some way, shape or form they are mirroring former Ministers of the One

Bermuda Alliance Government by fuzzing the numbers.

It is just incredibly poor form, Mr. Speaker, to attack public officers who serve the Government of the day. They served the One Bermuda Alliance Government of the day, and they serve the Progressive Labour Party Government of the day. And they do their work without fear or favour, whether we like the statistics that come out or we do not like the statistics that come out. The inference from the Opposition Leader that somehow statistics by public officers may [be] manipulated is reprehensible. And I would have thought that the Honourable Opposition Leader would have taken this opportunity to withdraw that attack and to crystallise his thoughts politically and in this House; but he has not done so.

So, I just want to share that because I think that it is important to note that, yes, Bermuda has a different inflation dynamic than the United States. Do you know why that is, Mr. Speaker? Because unlike the United States, we cannot print money here. The United States has been printing money left, right and centre, sending out cheques, running up massive deficits in order to get money to their people. And that leaves more money chasing fewer goods and services. So, yes, there is significant inflation in the United States. And yes, that inflation will in turn trickle over to Bermuda. But over the last few years our inflation rate has been lower than the rate of inflation in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. It has been lower. Even though we do important things, our inflation rate has been lower, Mr. Speaker. So I think that it is important that we keep those particular things in context.

But I think what is also important, Mr. Speaker, is to understand and imagine what policy changes mean and the impact of which they have on the lives of working people. Now, you heard the Honourable Minister of Labour talk about the things of which he is doing in the Ministry of Labour and [what] the Government is doing to impact working people. The Opposition Leader's attack yesterday on the integrity of the Statistics [Department] of this country mentioned nothing about solutions, nothing about what can be done, mentioned nothing about importers and others who possibly contribute to the [challenge with the] supply chain and the challenges around that, Mr. Speaker. No mention of that; just a baseless attack on public officers.

But here is the thing that I will tell you, Mr. Speaker. I know that this Government has done something about it. And let me explain, Mr. Speaker, because the Leader of the Opposition was a Minister of the Government in 2016. And you know what happened in 2016, Mr. Speaker? The former Government raised payroll taxes on working people in this country to the highest level in history, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that again: The former Government raised payroll taxes on working people to the highest level that they

had been in history, Mr. Speaker. Working people were paying 6 per cent of their income to payroll taxes—making \$48,000 less, 6 per cent of your income going toward payroll taxes.

Four years later, Mr. Speaker, that figure was reduced by two-thirds. And instead of persons paying almost \$3,000 a year in taxes, working people under this Government are paying less than \$1,000, Mr. Speaker. That is how you deal with matters around things such as inflation, putting more money in people's pockets. There are actual real policy differences, Mr. Speaker, that make an impact in people's lives. So I am proud to be a part of a Government that has reduced taxes for working people to the lowest level in history.

And inside of our election manifesto this time around, we were true to it in 2017 when we said we would reduce it, and in 2020 we said that we will eliminate it, Mr. Speaker. Those are the types of changes that have real impact on people's lives, Mr. Speaker. That means that working people are paying almost \$2,000 a year less in payroll taxes than they were when this Government came into office, Mr. Speaker. And that is significant. That is a significant buttress for those persons who are struggling with increasing prices. When they have more money in their pockets due to lower taxes, Mr. Speaker, that is important.

And it is important that we recognise that we have to make sure that we have fairness and justice in this country, Mr. Speaker. So earlier today we tabled a report from the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses, Mr. Speaker. And I think it is important as we are talking about matters of fairness and justice that we remember the history of what this report represents, Mr. Speaker. Because we recall . . . you were there, Mr. Speaker. I was there. We were all sitting on the same Opposition benches in 2014 when the late Walton Brown (God rest his soul) introduced a motion into the House of Assembly, and that motion passed in the House of Assembly. And remember all of the manoeuvring at that time of the Government of the day in saying that the motion cannot pass, that the motion had to be restructured, that the motion would cause the Government to spend money, X, Y and Z?

The motion did pass that evening. And I remember the former Government castigated one of their own Members who split sides because she voted her conscience because she knew, as someone from St. David's, that there was wrong that was done to her fore-parents. Government did not support it. The Governor rejected it, Mr. Speaker. And we found ourselves working to change the law to allow the Premier to call a commission of inquiry in addition to the Governor.

When given that power, Mr. Speaker, the former Government, instead of following the will of the House of Assembly and calling a commission of inquiry to investigate these historic land losses decided to appoint a politically motivated one in the hopes that

it would get them to buttress their electoral position. And the only thing that it came up with, Mr. Speaker, the only new information it came up with was that it implicated one of their own sitting Members of the Legislature and recommended them for further investigation.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we took Government, we kept our promise. And there is someone, looking down upon us today proud of what we were able to accomplish by keeping their word. We all remember how forceful Walton was on this issue, how impassioned he was on this issue. And the truth is, Mr. Speaker, today there are families in this country who feel that their voice has finally been heard. They feel as though they are not invisible. They feel as though finally someone has listened and put what they have experienced in writing and made it real and said that, *You were treated wrongly, unfairly and unjustly*. That is the difference of which governance can make inside of people's lives, Mr. Speaker.

And it is important, like the Honourable Member from constituency 2 said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot put a price on justice. You cannot. And so as we move forward on this, Mr. Speaker, there will be a time for debate on this in this Honourable House. There will be a time to think about how we are going to adjust. But as we talk about the changes that impact the decisions that affect people's lives, we must recognise and understand that this year around the Christmas table for a great deal of many families there will be a different sense, something that is intangible, something that you cannot touch, that they will say, *Finally, someone has listened to us, and finally someone is trying to right the wrongs of the past*. And that, Mr. Speaker, is something that is vital and important.

CLARIEN BANK CHARGING IN-PERSON TELLER FEES

Hon. E. David Burt: And it is vital that fairness happens throughout this country, Mr. Speaker. Because I understand the criticism of which we get from some quarters who do not believe the Government is being forceful enough, who feel that we have a 36 majority and feel as though more things should be done. Mr. Speaker, I accept that criticism as valid. Because when people see things, like the Honourable Member from constituency 4 and the Minister responsible for Social Development and Seniors spoke about, when we see local banking institutions who will introduce five-dollar fees for seniors to access their own money, they rightly question, *What will this Government do about it? How is it fair what is being done? What rights do we have as senior citizens in order to make sure that we have fair access to banking services?* And those are true and valid questions.

And I heard one of my Honourable Members saying, *In some places and cases there may be too much regulation inside of the economy*. Well, in some

places, Mr. Speaker, we may actually need to do more. And so as we end this year, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that it is clear that, though the economic conditions in this country are challenged and though we recognise it is the purpose of corporations to make money and return value to shareholders, they cannot do that while disenfranchising the most vulnerable in our community on the most basic access to things such as banking services. And this Government will not hesitate to act. And we will proceed with that action, Mr. Speaker, because it is vital. It is important. And it is unconscionable in my opinion that with all of the challenges that persons have in this country, especially our senior citizens, they will be told to pay more to access their own money.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we move into the Christmas season and this is the last sitting of the House for 2021, I think that it is important that all persons and all Honourable Members and all persons in our community do all that we can to make sure that we make this a season of giving and a season of joy for so many. This will certainly be the second year in a row that the Government's Cabinet Office Christmas Party is not happening. We decided to cancel it a few months ago and ensure that the money that we would typically spend on that goes toward purchasing gifts for foster families, because it is vital to recognise when economic conditions are challenged, more help and more assistance must be given to the community. And that is something that we are proud to do here in the Cabinet Office. We are proud for the Government's perspective.

And I am proud to lead a party, Mr. Speaker, that up and down this country has met the needs of their constituents, not just in the holiday season, but throughout the entire year. So from east to west we have our Members of Parliament and our branches giving out turkeys, giving out hampers, making sure we are giving out vouchers, doing whatever they can to make sure that the vulnerable in our community have assistance. There have been branches that have not stopped feeding programmes this entire year and that are out there all the time, Mr. Speaker. And that is the true strength of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party. We do our work in Government, Mr. Speaker, but we also do our work inside of our communities.

So as I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the Honourable Members of the Progressive Labour Party for the work that they are continuing to do inside of their communities in meeting the needs of their constituents. And I want to thank all of the helping agencies, all of the persons in this country, all of those who are making sure that they are doing their part to bring Christmas cheer where there are families who are hurting, Mr. Speaker.

It is vital that we look forward with a sense of hope. It is vital that we look forward with a sense of optimism. And I hope that during this season we recognise the difficult year that we have been through,

but also recognise the hope and optimism and promise in the future that we can come together as a community and make sure that we look after our fellow men and women.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, in saying that, I wish all persons in this country a very merry Christmas. I wish persons a very blessed and prosperous New Year. I sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will enjoy your time in the west in Somerset. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, for all of us we must look forward to a year, a new year 2022, of better unity, better (I would say) camaraderie and making sure that we do our part to protect our country's health so that we can make sure that we rebuild and revitalise our economy so that we can do more to provide for the people in this country and what we need in order to not only survive, Mr. Speaker, but to thrive.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, merry Christmas to you and to your family and to all Honourable Members during this season.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Thank you, Members and Ministers, for your participation throughout the day and particularly for the warm wishes that have been expressed by many Members here this evening on the motion to adjourn as we go into this Christmas season. And I would just like to add my sentiments to that as well, wishing well upon all of your families.

Members, take this time during this season to remember the reason for the season and to spend time with your loved ones. And just remember that there are many who will not have that opportunity as they have done in the past to spend this time with loved ones due to the impact of death and sickness that have come upon the Island under this pandemic. And be especially mindful of those family members during this time who are still mourning the loss of loved ones and give a special prayer for them during this time.

Be safe. Continue to stay well. Continue to practice the right conditions under these restrictions so that we can stay on top of the effects of the virus in our community. And, Members, we look forward to everyone being able to join us again in the new year when we restart the session early in February.

Be safe, Members. Have a good Christmas season. And with that, this session comes to a close. Good night.

Some Hon. Members: Good night, Mr. Speaker.

[At 7:53 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 4 February 2022.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
2021/2022 SESSION
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
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