



**Ministerial Statement**  
by  
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**Minister of Public Works**  
**Shelly Bay Beach – An Update**  
**27 July 2018**

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Good Morning, **Mr. Speaker**.

As the Minister responsible for the Department of Parks, I am pleased to update this Honourable House and the general public on progress thus far on a proposed plan to enhance the beach experience at Shelly Bay Park. This proposal aims to create opportunities for Bermudian entrepreneurs. Economic opportunity for Bermudian entrepreneurs at our parks and beaches is an election promise in the platform that swept the Progressive Labour Party to victory in the last General Election.

My remarks this morning, **Mr. Speaker**, are a continuation of a transparent and consultative process that began many months ago with the people of Hamilton Parish through their elected representatives who are our colleagues and Honourable Members of this House.

For the record, **Mr. Speaker**, I thought it might be helpful to review a timeline so that there's a greater appreciation of the collaborative, thoughtful nature of this project to date – especially as the consultative process reaches an important stage. This is crunch time - as the summer advances – the window for entrepreneurial success this summer narrows.

After the former concession structure at Shelly Bay was finally demolished and cleared from the site it not only removed a derelict eye sore, but simultaneously sparked dialogue in our community about what should happen next at Shelly Bay Park. The viewpoints are as varied as the day is long. I have heard from some who would like to see a new building erected where the old structure once stood... and I've heard from just as many who enjoy the open space the demolition created along the North Shore.

Obviously, **Mr. Speaker**, both perspectives have value. And I, for one, haven't a clue which view has the greatest favour among the public. Even in Hamilton Parish – the community that embraces Shelly Bay as its own – there are competing views. Short of a popular vote, I'm not sure how you sort this one out in short order. But I do know there was a vote one year ago and the tally was 24 to 12. And in that democratic process I, and my colleagues on this side, promised to (and if you'll allow me to quote, **Mr. Speaker**), we promised in our Election Platform to do the following:

*“...in partnership with the Bermuda Tourism Authority, to create new business opportunities for Bermudians through the development and enhancement of our beach and park tourism product”.*

**Mr. Speaker**, as a result of discussions with the Minister responsible for Tourism, the Honourable Jamahl Simmons, I was quite pleased to learn that the Bermuda Tourism Authority had a plan for Shelly Bay as part of its 2016 Beach Economy Vision. It was a thoughtful plan completed over 15 months and presented to him as the Shadow Minister.

The report outlined, in detail, the work completed by the Bermuda Tourism Authority (BTA) Beach Economy Working Group with the assistance of several civil servants from various government departments. It explained the steps and timeline involved in executing a new vision for Bermuda's beaches.

The promise of the vision is to: (1) create jobs for Bermudians; (2) increase visitor spending; and (3) improve the beach experience for beach-goers – locals and visitors alike.

The contents of the report can be distilled into nine action points.

1. Create Beach Economy Target List
2. Create Beach Vision
3. Educate the Public
4. Coordinate Government Departments & Consolidate Landlords
5. Update Legislation while Protecting the Environment & Natural Beauty
6. Create Beach Identities
7. Make Beaches More Competitive
8. Create Jobs Plan and a More Focused RFP Process
9. Empower Bermudian Entrepreneurs with One-stop Concierge

**Mr. Speaker**, to fill the service gaps and seize the economic opportunity at Bermuda's public beaches, the report proposed the implementation and/or addition of beach amenities and concessionaires at five beaches throughout the island: Horseshoe Bay, Shelly Bay, Clearwater Beach, Tobacco Bay and John Smith's Bay.

These beaches, known as the target list, represent **five of forty** public beaches, or 12 percent of all public beaches, throughout the Island. They were selected because they are already well-travelled beaches with established infrastructure.

Importantly, then-Shadow Tourism Minister MP Simmons was consulted on the plan, as were other members of the then-Opposition. The BTA sought the perspectives of both political parties, BEST, the Parks Commission, dozens of civil servants, thousands of visitors and hundreds of locals. All were consulted in the process that built the Beach Economy Vision. It was released publicly - covered widely in local media and the final product was bipartisan and collaborative.

Significantly, **Mr. Speaker**, the proposal for Shelly Bay was right down the middle of those divergent views I mentioned earlier. The plan in this case calls for attractively outfitted non-permanent modified shipping containers. They would house relatively simple offerings that are non-disruptive to the traditional picnicking culture at Shelly Bay. This plan is a temporary measure that fits somewhere neatly between those who want to see a structure return and those who want to see nothing at all. With this plan, no one is locked into any decision and the cost to implement is low. Like many things, **Mr. Speaker**, the majority of the public is somewhere in the middle and this proposal seemed to land right in that sweet spot.

Encouraged by this, I, along with Minister Simmons, arranged for BTA representatives to meet with the MPs from Hamilton Parish so that they could see specifically what was being proposed for Shelly Bay Park. And so they did.

Not surprisingly, **Mr. Speaker**, those Honourable Members, MPs Tinee Furbert, Wayne Furbert and Derrick Burgess voiced support for what they saw. However, everyone agreed – the MPs, the Ministers and the BTA – everyone agreed that we must first take the plan to the people of Hamilton Parish before doing anything else.

**Mr. Speaker**, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, that is precisely what happened. I along with the other partners in this venture attended that meeting at Francis Patton School and it was a packed house – standing room only. Everyone was heard. And again, opinions were varied.

Admittedly, **Mr. Speaker**, only hypothetical products and services could be shared that evening because the BTA was not proposing for itself to be the vendor at Shelly Bay. Instead it was proposing that entrepreneurs, some of them stymied by an overly burdensome bureaucratic process, be given a chance to have their shot.

That's why in the meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup>, at the request of some of the constituents who attended, it was agreed to return to Hamilton Parish after the RFP was published and

entrepreneurs had the opportunity to respond. This week, **Mr. Speaker**, the BTA completed its interview process with all the applicants who responded to the RFP.

In the spirit of transparency, I thought it might be helpful to share the names of the businesses that responded to the RFP and what they proposed. They are:

- Ashley's Lemonade, a Bermuda brand that is the epitome of mom and pop entrepreneurship;
- Simple Café, a beachside deli-café idea from Hamilton Parish residents;
- Smokin' Barrel, a chicken and ribs food truck;
- Tarzan Boats, an adventurous water experience from a Hamilton Parish youth football coach that includes beach equipment rentals; and

A 5<sup>th</sup> business responded to the RFP but has since withdrawn for personal reasons.

**Mr. Speaker**, I'm quite heartened by this list of Bermudian applicants. It's a mix of new businesses looking to get off the ground and existing businesses looking to expand. I should note: the list doesn't include a small number of Bermudian entrepreneurs who would like to provide services at the beach as part of a rotating calendar of events designed to attract locals and visitors to Shelly Bay when usage of the park is otherwise low.

This is a critical point, **Mr. Speaker**. The short list of applicants I just mentioned are operating under the assumption that their main customer base will be current users of the beach – namely families. They will gear their offerings to Bermudian families. It will be critical to their success.

Additionally, the BTA plans to offer additional family-friendly programming that will encourage families to come to Shelly Bay at other times when traffic is light – particularly visiting families who choose to stay in vacation rentals around Hamilton Parish because it is the parish with more Airbnb listings than any other. It turns out the same kinds of programming ideas attractive to visitors, will be attractive to many Bermudian families too. That might be a s'mores activity at sunset in October or a fish fry at the park in November. These additional programmes bring consumers to the beach and help to ensure those Bermudian entrepreneurs who are there have a fair shot at success.

**Mr. Speaker**, now that there are actual entrepreneurs lining up for this opportunity, we can make good on our promise to return to Hamilton Parish. In fact, all the applicants I just mentioned have agreed to be on-hand to demonstrate their business ideas and earn buy-in from the community. This will take place Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup> from 6:30pm to 8:30 pm at Shelly Bay Park. Those aiming to provide food and beverage services will have samples for the public and those who are providing a service or experience will do their best to show all of us how their set-up is designed to work. Additionally, we will mark out with tape the proposed location of the containers. Feedback will be taken on the spot or emailed later.

Concurrently, long term proposals for Shelly Bay are being developed by Ministry of Public Works & Department of Parks technical officers – it is my expectation that we will follow the same consultative process with the MP's and general public of Hamilton Parish in presenting those ideas for their consideration later this year.

As I mentioned at the outset, **Mr. Speaker**, this is a critical juncture in this consultative process. I trust I have provided a fair overview of what has transpired on this project to date and next steps. I look forward to a conclusion that helps improve the beach experience for everyone, while at the same time, providing economic opportunity for our people.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.