



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT To the House of Assembly

by

**The Hon. W. Lawrence Scott, JP, MP
Minister of Transport**

Resumption of Cruise Ships

Monday, 22nd March 2021

Mr. Speaker, there is no tourism without transport. The cruise ship industry is a key revenue generator for Bermuda. On average, the economic impact from the industry is \$170M, with approximately 185 ship calls annually. In 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the island saw only four calls out of the scheduled 196 projected calls. In 2021, 189 calls were originally projected, and the number of calls continues to dwindle. The Cruise Ship schedule requires a complete overhaul because of daily cancellations. To date, there have not been any calls in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, looking ahead, Bermuda is in a unique position of having a strong and proven COVID-19 response plan to mitigate the importation of the virus through legislation, rigorous PCR Nasal Pharyngeal testing, and contact tracing. We also regularly updated stakeholder guidance to keep our community safe and our commercial and private marine and air borders open. With Bermuda's early lockdown and stringent covid-19 health protocols, this has been a big win for Bermuda, including Bermuda earning the World Travel & Tourism Council "Safe Travels" stamp, a designation awarded to destinations with the highest in health-safety protocols. Also, important, Bermuda has been keeping its Reproductive number under 1, and, more recently, the US Centers for Disease Control reduced Bermuda's travel advisory ranking down to Level 2.

Mr. Speaker, I feel duty bound to share with this Honourable House that the Ministry of Transport believes a solution for the safe resumption of cruising is a concept called 'homeporting'.

This concept is new to Bermuda and was introduced to us by a small luxury cruise line who were so impressed with Bermuda's handling of Covid-19 - they expressed interest in homeporting a ship in Bermuda. Thus, the concept of homeporting in Bermuda was born out of the travel restrictions in other jurisdictions.

Since then Mr. Speaker, we have other cruise lines interested in the homeporting concept as well. However, discussions are ongoing, and no contracts have been signed yet.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, being ever so excited about this opportunity and the potential economic stimulus from the cruise ship industry to our economy, has diligently worked with the Ministry of Health to create a framework and response plan to restart the cruising industry safely – ideally starting in June this summer.

Mr. Speaker, the Homeporting concept means that a cruise line would use Bermuda as their home base for a cruise to nowhere or their private island to our south, for three or four months; all passengers and crew would be fully immunised and subject to Bermuda's Ministry of Health COVID-19 protocols. Passengers would fly into Bermuda to pick up their cruise and have the option to book a pre-and/or post-hotel stay and enjoy Bermuda longer.

Mr. Speaker, we have estimated a potential economic impact of over forty million dollars into Bermuda's economy from this initiative to homeport three ships in Bermuda, not necessarily at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, of importance, there is opportunity for up to 60 additional local part-time jobs on the ground that may be created to provide the extra services required to support the Homeporting concept in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, since taking up the post of Minister of Transport, I have learned that cruisers all over the world love to cruise, including many in Bermuda!

Mr. Speaker, there is pent-up demand for leisure travel and cruise passengers in particular are keen to resume their travels but safely. Bermuda's record of pandemic management has created significant interest in homeporting from our shores and as such discussions are advancing and before this House rises for the Easter Recess I felt it necessary to advise Honourable Members and the public of the ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Transport to play its part in the economic recovery of our tourism sector and Bermuda as a whole.

Thank You, **Mr. Speaker!**

END