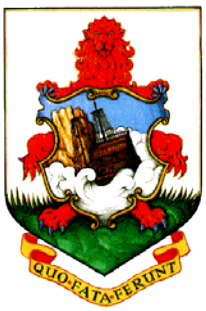

2025/2026 SESSION
of the

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

JUNE - JULY 2025

(*Sittings 14-17 of the 2025-2026 Session)*
(pages 1107-1352 and Index)

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

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
13 JUNE 2025
10:02 AM

Sitting Number 14 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Members—

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 30 May 2025]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes of the 30 of May have been circulated. Any amendments required?

No amendments. The Minutes will be printed as confirmed.

[Minutes of 30 May 2025 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: We have been informed that the following Members will be absent today: MP Emilygail Dill, Opposition Leader Jarion Richardson, Minister Adams and we have also been informed that Minister Weeks will be absent as well.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: We have a handful of papers and communications this morning. The first one is in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Are you doing it, Premier?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS OF BERMUDA AMENDMENT BY-LAWS 2025

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Chartered Professional Accountants of Bermuda Amendment By-Laws 2025, in exercise of power conferred by section 7 of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Bermuda Act 1973, makes the following by-laws which, pursuant to section 7(2) of that Act, have been approved by a majority of the members of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The second item this morning is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

ELECTRICITY (INNOVATIVE LICENCE) REGULATIONS 2023

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Electricity (Innovative Licence) Regulations 2023, as made by the Minister responsible for energy, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 54 of the Electricity Act 2016, and section 5 of the Regulatory Authority Act 2011.

The Speaker: Thank you. Would you like to do your second one?

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2022 (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) REGULATIONS 2023

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Electricity Amendment Act 2022 (Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2023, as made by the Minister responsible for energy, in exercise of the power conferred by section 12(2) of the Electricity Amendment Act 2022.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next paper or communication this morning is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Pleasant good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPORT MAY 2024

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Department of Statistics May 2024 Labour Force Survey Report.

The Speaker: Thank you. Would you like to do the second one?

EMIGRATION IN BERMUDA, FACTORS DRIVING

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Factors Driving Emigration in Bermuda Report January 2025.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next paper or communication this morning is named the Minister of Tourism, Transport, Culture, and Sport.

Minister.

BERMUDA AIRPORT AUTHORITY 2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2022-2023.

The Speaker: Thank you. Would you like to do your second one?

TOURISM INVESTMENT (CLEARWATER COMMUNITY EVENT VENUE) ORDER 2025

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the Tourism Investment (Clearwater Community Event) Venue Order 2025, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that is the end of the papers and communications for today.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: On your Order Paper, the first Statement is in the name of Minister Weeks, but I had just announced that he would be absent today, so that Statement is being withdrawn.

So, Minister Haywood, would you like to do your Statement as the first Statement?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPORT MAY 2024

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lay the May 2024 Labour Force Survey Report and highlight for Members of this Honourable House the key findings of the Survey.

The Labour Force Survey is an economic tool that measures employment, unemployment, and the economically inactive population. The May 2024 Labour Force Survey results show that Bermuda's labour market remains robust. The Island reported increased employment and a very low unemployment rate of 1.6 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate for Bermudians stood at 1.6 per cent in May 2024, a decrease from the rate reported in November 2023. This is another positive indicator as economic and labour policies continue to support local employment. The youth unemployment rate for persons aged 16 to 24 stood at 2.4 per cent in May 2024.

This reduction from the November 2023 youth unemployment rate was due to a combination of factors: more employed youth and fewer youth seeking employment.

Mr. Speaker, other relevant findings from the May 2024 Survey include the following:

1. the employment rate increased to 81.4 per cent;

2. the median gross annual income (from a person's main job) increased to $73,157;
3. Bermudians comprised 76.3 per cent of the working population;
4. the labour force participation rate was 82.8 per cent;
5. the average hours worked per week in the main job was 41.3; and
6. among the economically inactive population, 63.1 per cent were retired.

Notably, there was growth in the Bermudian working population and growth in the Bermudian median gross annual income.

Mr. Speaker, while the findings indicate progress in terms of a steady improvement and growth in the labour market, the Government will continue to press on with its effective policies and programmes that support Bermuda's workers.

Mr. Speaker, investment in people is a cornerstone of Bermuda's economic development strategy. The Government has consistently prioritised workforce development, recognising that a well-trained and educated populace is essential for economic growth and stability.

By investing in education, training, and certification programmes, the Government is enhancing Bermudians' skills and fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development. These efforts have led to a more competitive and resilient workforce capable of adapting to changing market demands and driving innovation.

As a result, Bermudians are better equipped to secure high-quality jobs, contribute to the economy, and enjoy a higher standard of living. This strategic focus on human capital development ensures that Bermuda remains a vibrant and prosperous community where everyone can thrive.

Mr. Speaker, under the stewardship of the newly established National Certification and Apprenticeship Board, significant strides have been made to enhance the quality, relevance, and accessibility of apprenticeship and certification programmes across the Island.

- The number of apprentices has risen to 52.
- Thirty-four additional Bermudians earned the prestigious National Centre for Construction Education and Research Core industry certification—essential for construction and related trades.
- 26 scholarship recipients are pursuing studies overseas in the US, Canada, UK, and the Caribbean, while 10 others are engaged in short-term technical and vocational training courses.

Additionally, the Government launched several specialised programmes to address specific skill shortages and create new employment pathways. These include micro-credential courses and the Learn Through Experience [Hospitality] Programme. We have also embraced innovative methods such as the On-the-Job Training Programme in partnership with Financial Assistance to upskill Bermudians and meet evolving employer demands.

Mr. Speaker, this work is being carried out by the Department of Workforce Development which, last year, serviced 683 individuals directly and, with a robust monthly employment skills calendar of courses, catered to an additional 439 participants.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate our commitment to empowering our workforce and fostering economic sustainability. By investing in diverse training programmes and innovative upskilling strategies, the Government ensures that Bermudians have the skills to excel in dynamic industries and contribute meaningfully to the Island's development.

Mr. Speaker, the success stories across sectors are a testament to the power of education, hands-on experience, and strategic partnerships in shaping a resilient and prosperous future for Bermuda.

I encourage all Bermudians—whether you are just entering the workforce, seeking to enhance your skills, or considering a career change—to take full advantage of the programmes and services offered by the Department of Workforce Development.

The team is there to support you with career guidance, training opportunities, apprenticeship placements, and job referrals tailored to your goals.
Explore their services online at www.dwd.bm.

Your future starts with a single step—let us help you take it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would you like to do your second Statement?

EMIGRATION IN BERMUDA, FACTORS DRIVING

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lay the January 2025 Emigration Survey Report and highlight for Members of the Honourable House the key findings of the Survey.

The "Retaining the Local Workforce Position Paper 2024" highlights Bermuda's declining birth rate, ageing population and increasing emigration of the local population.

As noted in the Position Paper, migration is a social phenomenon, the causes of which can vary widely. While it is not uncommon for Bermuda to experience migration, emigration (if excessive) can be challenging for our small community.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt Bermuda requires a skilled and experienced workforce to drive economic growth and innovation, and when talented individuals leave the Island, the loss of human capital can hinder our ability to compete in the global market. We can lose knowledge, expertise and contributions to local economic development.

Against that backdrop, the Ministry of Economy and Labour engaged Global Research to better understand the degree of emigration, what motivated

Bermudians to leave the Island, and what might entice them to return.

Mr. Speaker, Global Research conducted three studies on Bermudian emigration, undertaking qualitative and quantitative research. The first involved in-depth interviews with 20 emigrated Bermudians, the second phase surveyed 105 emigrated Bermudians, and the third phase surveyed 416 adult Bermudians on Island.

The survey reveals that the most common reasons cited for emigration are the high cost of living and the lack of affordability, particularly beyond retirement, as well as limited employment opportunities and lack of job growth. These economic pressures prompted Bermudians to seek better prospects overseas.

When comparing quality of life, respondents reported significantly higher satisfaction with life overseas, particularly in areas such as the cost of living, health care affordability, access to social activities, and overall life satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, the survey also asked what might have prevented emigration. Respondents pointed to a more manageable cost of living, increased job opportunities, improved public and post-secondary education, and initiatives to make Bermuda a more vibrant and appealing place to live.

To encourage Bermudians to remain or return, the most popular suggestions included addressing the high cost of living, engaging with those who have left to understand their reasons, improving educational opportunities, and expanding employment prospects. Respondents emphasised the need for lower costs in essential areas such as food, health care, housing, and retirement, as well as better access to affordable home ownership.

While the survey found that many Bermudians value family, friendships, the Island's natural beauty, and safety, it also highlighted concerns about governance, rising crime, and limited social opportunities. Overall satisfaction with life in Bermuda was rated as fair, with the highest satisfaction in personal relationships and safety, and the lowest in cost of living, health care, and governance.

Notably, 53 per cent of respondents indicated they may consider emigrating in the future, with 7 per cent likely to do so within the next two years. This is a significant portion of our population, and it is imperative that we listen to their concerns and act decisively.

Mr. Speaker, these findings present both a challenge and an opportunity. They challenge us to confront the realities facing our people, but they also offer a roadmap for meaningful change.

By addressing affordability, expanding opportunities, and enhancing the quality of life, we can create a Bermuda where more of our people choose to stay, and where those who have left feel welcome to return. The beauty of the Island, being close to family and friends, and living in a safe environment were all aspects that respondents valued about life in Bermuda.

The top five factors motivating Bermudians to emigrate are: the high cost of living, difficulty of retiring in Bermuda, overall management of Bermuda and the economy, availability of career opportunities in Bermuda and quality of life and activities in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the feedback from Global Research's survey work revealed that respondents appreciated having their opinions heard. They highlighted the beauty of the Island, the safety of the environment, and the proximity to family and friends as key factors for enjoying life in Bermuda. However, the primary motivations for Bermudians considering emigration include the high cost of living, challenges in retiring, concerns about the management of the economy, limited career opportunities, quality of life and activities, public school education standards, availability of specialised health care for persons with disabilities, and issues related to gang culture, crime, and violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025 SURVEY INSIGHTS AND PLANS

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This morning, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on the progress being made by the Ministry of Home Affairs to address one of the most pressing and persistent issues facing our community, the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the 2025 Throne Speech, this Government remains committed to advancing targeted, evidence-based reforms that enhance affordability, protect consumers, and promote fairness. To support this goal, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been tasked with leading the development of a Bermuda Cost of Living Strategy, a framework that seeks to address the costs and propose actionable solutions that deliver relief to those living and working in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this work, the Ministry has built on the work of existing reports and led its own public engagement efforts, including the completion of two national surveys: one focused on the lived experiences of residents and the other on the realities faced by local businesses. These surveys received responses from over 2,000 residents and 200 businesses, a clear demonstration of how deeply this issue resonates across our Island. The Ministry has commissioned a focus group with private sector stakeholders

and further has engaged in a series of one-on-one engagements with business owners.

Mr. Speaker, the findings reveal that nearly 70 per cent of residents report moderate to extreme financial strain, with housing and groceries emerging as the most unaffordable necessities. Businesses, on the other hand, point to labour costs, regulatory fees, energy costs and high rents as key barriers to affordability. While some relief measures are already in place as an extension of the recent 2025 budget cuts led by this Government, there is a clear call from the public for both broader and more targeted interventions, including expanded tax relief, enhanced landlord-tenant protections, subsidies for essentials, and greater regulatory streamlining.

Mr. Speaker, building on the feedback and recommendations, the Ministry will convene a Cost of Living Summit on Tuesday, 25 June 2025, at the Hamilton Princess [Hotel]. The Summit will bring together key stakeholders, including industry leaders, government agencies, consumer advocates and members of the public. It will serve as a key milestone in our national affordability agenda, providing a platform to present findings, validate solutions, and secure formal commitments to action. Participants will engage in structured dialogue, supported by data, to shape immediate and long-term responses.

Mr. Speaker, the expected outcomes of the Summit include the publication of a report outlining policy recommendations, sector-specific commitments, and immediate next steps for implementation. In the third quarter, the Ministry will present proposed legislative and regulatory amendments and will launch communications efforts to ensure continued transparency as we advance this critical work.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is impacted by every person living in Bermuda. The Ministry of Home Affairs and in collaboration with our partners, is committed to turning insight into action. We recognise that there are no quick fixes, but we have evidenced our commitment to swift, thoughtful action and are willing to leave no stone unturned as we work on behalf of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Cost of Living Summit represents an opportunity to refine our approach and to collectively work together toward a more affordable Bermuda. We will continue to update this Honourable House and the public as we progress from insight to implementation because the people of Bermuda deserve nothing less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would you like to do your second Statement?

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2022 (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) REGULATIONS 2023

AND

ELECTRICITY (INNOVATIVE LICENCE) REGULATIONS 2023

NEGATIVE RESOLUTIONS

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

I rise also today to table two negative resolutions concerning the Electricity Amendment Act 2022 [(Consequential Amendments)] Regulations 2023 and the Electricity (Innovative Licence) Regulations 2023. These regulations represent important instruments that are necessary to give full effect to the innovative licence provisions under section 32A of the Electricity Act 2016.

Mr. Speaker, the Electricity [(Innovative Licence)] Regulations 2023 establish a framework for the application, evaluation, and issuance of licences for companies wishing to test or deploy new technologies in the electricity sector. This innovative licence is intended to facilitate advancements that align with Bermuda's energy transition goals, allowing new or unproven technologies to be introduced in a controlled and regulated manner. These regulations were designed to ensure robust oversight by the Regulatory Authority and require appropriate environmental assessments, public consultations, and compliance with grid and safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, complementary to these are the Consequential Amendments Regulations 2023, which made necessary modifications to other statutes, including the Marine and Ports Services Act 2021 and the Public Lands Act 1984. These amendments were crafted to recognise the scope of the innovative licence within maritime and public lands contexts, thereby removing legal ambiguity and facilitating the practical implementation of pilot or demonstration projects.

Mr. Speaker, although both regulations were enacted in 2023, there has been a notable delay in operationalising the innovative licence framework. The Regulatory Authority, due to internal capacity and resourcing constraints, was not in a position to receive or process licence applications. This delay created procedural uncertainty for prospective applicants and risked undermining the intended benefits of the legislative amendments.

Mr. Speaker, today's tabling of these regulations as negative resolutions reaffirms this Government's commitment to delivering a predictable and transparent regulatory environment for innovation in the energy sector. We are hopeful that with these resolutions now formally before the Legislature, the Regulatory Authority will be in a position to begin accepting applications and issuing licences in accordance with the prescribed framework.

Mr. Speaker, this Government continues to support the responsible introduction of innovation in the

electricity sector, recognising the importance of technology in achieving cleaner, more affordable, and more resilient energy systems for Bermuda. We will continue to work closely with the Regulatory Authority to ensure the efficient and fair implementation of these tools and to maintain the public's confidence in the regulatory process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

NATIONAL HEROES DAY 2025: RECOGNISING LEGACY AND COMMUNITY

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

Mr. Speaker, June is the time when we pause to honour our National Heroes: those exceptional individuals whose courage, vision and service have helped shape Bermuda as we know it today.

Mr. Speaker, being named a National Hero is not just a ceremonial title. It reflects a legacy of courage, integrity, service, and vision. Our National Heroes represent the best of us. They have enriched the lives of others, improved the quality of life in Bermuda, and demonstrated a lasting commitment to the progress of our Island.

Mr. Speaker, by honouring their lives, we celebrate the values that define us as Bermudians—dedication to community, strength of character, love of country, and a deep belief in justice and fairness. To know our heroes is to know ourselves: our collective history, our identity, and the qualities that make Bermuda strong. They show us what is possible when passion meets purpose and remind us of our shared responsibility to build a better society.

Mr. Speaker, National Heroes Day is a time for reflection, honour and gratitude. This year, we reaffirm our commitment to recognise the eight extraordinary Bermudians who have already been named as National Heroes. Their stories continue to guide and inspire us.

Mr. Speaker, the Naming and Recognition Committee, under the National Heroes Act 2024, is a diverse committee of various sectors to ensure the selection process and the decision is fair and transparent. The members were selected in accordance with the statutory requirements, including representation from the public and the Opposition. The Committee unanimously concluded that none of the nominated individuals met the threshold of "exceptional and outstanding service to Bermuda" required under section 4(1) of the Act. Mr. Speaker, a letter dated 27 May 2025 was submitted to me stating the following: "Following careful review and discussion, the Committee has reached its recommendation. While we deeply respect the accomplishments of the nominees, it is the Committee's view that a new National Hero is a profound—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: I missed that.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —"Following careful review and discussion, the Committee has reached its recommendation. While we deeply respect the accomplishments of the nominees, it is the Committee's view that a new National Hero is a profound honour, reserved for individuals whose impact is not only exceptional, but larger than life. After a comprehensive assessment of the twenty-five individuals nominated, the Committee concluded that none fully [meet] this threshold at this time."

However, Mr. Speaker, the decision not to name a new National Hero at this time does not preclude the use of alternative forms of recognition for individuals whose contributions are significant but do not meet the statutory threshold. The Committee has determined to reconvene to consider suggestions for such recognition based on the nominations received, and the Ministry will consider these options through the appropriate channels.

I extend my sincere thanks to all those who submitted nominations, many of which recognised the legacies of deceased Bermudians whose contributions shaped the life of our Island. I also wish to thank the Naming and Recognition Committee for their careful and committed work in reviewing each submission and stewarding this meaningful process with integrity.

Mr. Speaker, under the National Heroes Act 2024, the public nomination process now takes place every 10 years. That process began in late 2024 and will not reopen until 2034. While some may be disappointed that a new hero is not being named this year, this approach reflects a deliberate effort to ensure that such a high national honour is bestowed with the greatest care, reflection, and public consensus. The decision not to name a National Hero at this time is guided by the Committee's rigorous review process and the need to maintain the integrity, consistency, and significance of the title.

Mr. Speaker, this honour is reserved for those whose impact on Bermuda is profound, enduring, and widely recognised. The 10-year cycle allows us necessary time to assess legacy in full, to educate and engage the public in a thoughtful manner and to safeguard the standing of those who carry this title on behalf of our Island.

Mr. Speaker, the eight individuals who have been formally recognised as National Heroes to date embody the highest ideals of service, leadership, and legacy to Bermuda:

- Dame Lois Browne-Evans;
- Dr. Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon;
- Dr. Pauulu Kamarakafego;
- Sir Henry Tucker;

- Mary Prince;
- Gladys Morrell;
- Sir Edward Trenton Richards; and
- Sir John W. Swan.

Mr. Speaker, to honour these eight trailblazers, the Department of Culture will host the National Heroes Celebration on Tuesday, July 1, 2025. This free event, open to the public, will spotlight some of Bermuda's most talented artists, all of whom carry forward the legacy of excellence and cultural pride that our National Heroes represent. Event details will be available at www.culture.bm.

Mr. Speaker, from National Heroes Day through to 22 June, CITV will also air a series of video vignettes that highlight the lives and impact of our National Heroes. These stories serve not only to inform but to inspire civic pride and cultural understanding.

Mr. Speaker, National Heroes Weekend also coincides with the Edward Cross Long Distance Comet Race, a historic event in Bermuda's sailing calendar, which takes place between the West End Sailboat Club, the Mid Atlantic Boat [and Sports] Club, and the East End Mini Yacht Club. This race stands as a tribute to Edward "Jack" Cross, who created the trophy annually awarded to the winner of the race. This year's race begins in the west at the West End Sailboat Club at 11:00 am on Monday, concluding approximately three hours later in St. George's Harbour, near the East End Mini Yacht Club.

Mr. Speaker, as you all would be aware, National Heroes Weekend also includes the vibrant celebration of Carnival in Bermuda, featuring events such as SPACE JAM J'ouvert, the energetic Revel De Road parade and numerous other experiences organised by Bermudian event producers for an action-packed weekend of culture, music, and celebration.

Mr. Speaker, as we honour the legacy of our National Heroes, let us reflect on their examples and recommit ourselves to building a Bermuda that reflects their values: justice, service, courage and unity. In celebrating them, we celebrate who we are, Mr. Speaker, and who we aspire to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I believe you have . . . that is it?

Minister of Health, would you like to do your Statement now?

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to update this Honourable House and the public on the continued work to support and strengthen mental health in Bermuda. Mental health is not just a policy issue, it affects real people, families and communities every day.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin with a story. Picture a newborn entering the world already struggling. Born into an unstable environment and facing addiction from the very start due to drug exposure during pregnancy. That child is placed into foster care, struggles with feeling unwanted, and grows up being told, *You will not succeed because of your behaviour*. They face depression, low self-esteem and self-doubt. This is not fiction, this is the real experience of a Bermudian who, through support and their own resilience, is now thriving. This story reminds us that mental health is personal. It lives among us in our homes, our schools, our workplaces and communities. It is real and it matters.

The Ministry of Health remains committed to ensuring that every Bermudian has access to the mental health support they need. Mental well-being is an essential part of overall health, and we are embedding it into our primary care and public health strategies. Our goal is to act early, prevent crises and ensure support is available when people need it most.

Mr. Speaker, one of our major steps forward is the implementation of the Youth Mental Health Plan. In partnership with the Bermuda College, and under the leadership of Dr. Daniel Cavanagh, a dynamic group of young leaders is driving this initiative. They are working to create a future where mental health is openly discussed, services are easy to access, and no young person feels alone. These young voices are shaping real change. They are helping to remove stigma and show that it is okay to talk about mental health. Their work is central to building a community that listens, supports and empowers its young people.

Mr. Speaker, we know the need is urgent. Research from the Pan American Health Organization and other groups shows a clear rise in stress, anxiety and substance use. We know that statistics confirm that one in four people will suffer from a mental health condition. Recognising this, the Ministry has taken action to improve services and our legislation. We are working to update the Mental Health Act 1968 and strengthen policies that increase access to care and protect individual rights. We are building a system that meets people where they are—before their mental health worsens. Mr. Speaker, one key part of this work is the Acute Adult Mental Health Integrated Care Pathway, which focuses on how adults with mental health needs receive care from start to finish. Phase I of this initiative was completed in 2023, and the final report was published in February 2024. It provided valuable insights into the challenges people face and gave us 20 key recommendations. These recommendations guide our investments in services, awareness, education and early intervention. We are focused on building a system that is [patient]-centred, efficient and compassionate.

Mr. Speaker, to support these efforts, we appointed a Mental Health Programmes Coordinator, who has already improved how programmes are run, and is

working to make this role permanent. Strong leadership in this space is essential for long-term success. We also recognise the need to expand access to therapists, strengthen outreach, and provide better mental health support in our schools. Children and teens must have the tools to cope, grow, and succeed. Preventing crisis begins with giving young people early support.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are proud to launch a National Mental Health Awareness Campaign under the theme: "Changing the Paradigm: The Future of Mental Well-being." It highlights that mental health is vital to our overall health and deserves the same attention and care. The campaign began on May 1 with a proclamation at City Hall, marking May as Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month. Its tagline, Mr. Speaker, is "We are Not an Island." That reminds us that while Bermuda may be geographically isolated, no one should feel isolated when facing mental health challenges. Throughout May we held events to engage people of all ages, raising awareness, starting conversations and helping everyone better understand mental health. These activities were developed in partnership with a range of community groups, service providers, schools and health organisations. We thank our partners such as the Bermuda College, the Bermuda Hospitals Board, the Family Centre, Solstice and many others for joining us in this shared mission.

Mr. Speaker, our message is clear: there is no health without mental health. No one should be ashamed of seeking help. Getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness. We will continue to follow the guidance of our care pathways and youth plan to build a community where mental wellness is visible, valued and supported. I strongly encourage everyone to be part of removing stigma in our community and making sure every person in Bermuda knows they are not alone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES DAY

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shine a light on a celebration that may not make the frontpage news, but quietly shapes the way we understand who we are. On June 9, the Bermuda Libraries and Archives commemorated International Archives Day. Here in Bermuda, they are celebrating it with a month-long exhibition titled "Legacy in Paint and Paper," which is open until 9 July at the Bermuda Archives.

Mr. Speaker, that name, "Legacy in Paint and Paper," says it all. It brings together two artists. Two ways of seeing. One island's layered story. This exhibit is the result of a powerful collaboration between the Department of Libraries and Archives and the National Trust. It places the work of Edward James and Thomas Driver side by side. These are two men capturing similar scenes of Bermuda in very different ways. What they show us is not how Bermuda looked, but how it felt.

Mr. Speaker, International Archives Day is not just about dusty boxes or yellowed maps. It is about memory. It is about truth. It is about keeping our story whole. Archives matter because they do four quiet but critical things:

1. they protect our rights;
2. they support learning;
3. they safeguard transparency; and
4. they connect generations—those who came before, and those still to come.

The team at the Bermuda Archives does this work with care and consistency every single day. They gather records, land deeds, photos [and] letters. Even voices from the past are recorded, preserved and made accessible, not only to the local population but also to the wider world. The Bermuda Archives serves as many as 30 overseas academics each year who are conducting research on the Island's unique history. Topics researched by those visiting scholars range from maritime history, colonial records and the records of enslaved people, and the role Bermuda played in supporting the Viginia Colony and commerce in the early Americas.

These are not just documents. They are echoes. They are anchors. They are reminders that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. Mr. Speaker, this exhibit is also a reminder of what happens when we work together. The Bermuda National Trust holds the largest private deposit in the National Archives, a sign of trust and of shared responsibility. That is what makes this moment special. It is not just a government project. It is a shared effort to protect what belongs to all of us. This is why the Government will continue to support partnerships like these, because history does not live in isolation. It lives in the hands of those who care enough to keep it alive.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Honourable Members and every resident of Bermuda to visit the exhibition. It is in the lower level of the Government Administration Building, right there on Parliament Street. Take a walk through, take a moment and let yourself see Bermuda through someone else's eyes. You will leave with a deeper appreciation, not just for the art, but for the place and the quiet hands that work to preserve it.

Mr. Speaker, when we protect our past, we prepare for our future. Because a country that remembers its roots is better equipped to choose its future. Let us honour our history not just in words, but in the way we teach, the way we lead and the way we care for the records that carry our story forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements this morning.

Before I move on the next item, I should have acknowledged this morning that we have Acting Sergeant-at-Arms, this morning, Mr. Raoul Ming. Sergeant of Arms Allen is off the Island at the moment.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: We appreciate Mr. Ming making himself available to us.

Thank you, sir.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: That now leads us to the Premier's Questions. For our listening audience, whenever we sit on the second Friday of a month we add Premier's Questions to the traditional Question Period. The Premier's Questions is a separate 30 minutes where questions will be put to the Premier in regard to concerns from Members of the House. And they are questions that are submitted off the floor to the Premier. The tradition is that the Opposition Leader gets to ask his questions first, and the Opposition Leader has three questions and two supplementaries. Other Members have one question and two supplementaries.

The Opposition Leader's role is being carried this morning by the Deputy Opposition Leader. I will call on MP Ben Smith. Would you like to put your questions to start us off?

Mr. Ben Smith: Yes. Thank you and good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

QUESTION 1: WORK PERMIT HOLDER ENGLISH SPEAKING REQUIREMENT

Mr. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier confirm whether the Government intends to apply any exceptions to the English speaking requirement for work permit holders? And what criteria will be used to determine eligibility for such exceptions?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

I do not have the knowledge. That would certainly be a question for the Minister of Economy and Labour, who I think is conducting a work permit policy consultation currently. I cannot state whether or not those things are covered in the work permit consultation, but I would say if the Opposition, or other persons, have views they should engage in the consultative efforts. This Government has made sure that we have consulted widely on a number of things. The work permit changes that have been put out to consultation should be pretty extensive and I encourage all employers and all persons who may engage in making sure they have the supply of adequate labour go ahead and respond with their questions, thoughts or concerns.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, considering that one of the changes that was highlighted was this English speaking part of the work permit policy, would the Premier be able to say whether this has been a major issue in the community that has made this highlight happen?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I cannot necessarily speak to the matter related to what consultation or other items took place to get there. As I repeated in my earlier answer, this is a matter that is under the Minister of Economy and Labour, and also under the advice and recommendations . . . I believe the review was done in part with the members of the Board of Immigration. What I can state as an overall basis, is that the reality is that we are an English speaking jurisdiction and, of course, it would be challenging for persons interacting with matters relating to government, et cetera, taking up residency in the country with an inability. This is not something that is new, this is something that has been mooted for a while, this is something that was in our 2017 Election Manifesto, conversation and discussions around.

So, I will again state that it is a consultation process, if there are those persons who have concerns. This is not something like we saw for the party Opposite, where they just said, *We changed the work permit policy and here is the new policy*. We have gone through; we have had consultation with persons and now we are—

Hon. Michael Fahy: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Premier is misleading the House in his last statement. I can tell you that the work permit policy that was put forward by the now Opposition was one of the most comprehensive consultations that has taken place in any work permit policy. In fact, it lasted almost 18 months.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I clearly remember when that Honourable Member said before the election in 2012 that, *No no no, we are not going to change term limits,* and then one month later term limits were gone.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, we note, we understand. We get it.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Premier is misleading the House. Term limits had nothing to do with work permit policy.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, here we go, Mr. Speaker.
That, of course, would be their interpretation. But that is absolutely not correct. Not correct. From his perspective he, as usual, is engaged in an attempt to rewrite history. But the public remember precisely what they did on that particular side, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Point of order, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Premier is continuing to mislead the House. There has been no rewriting of history here by me in any way. Term limit policy has nothing to do with work permit policy. In fact, the work permit policy, again, took about an 18-month consultation period with dozens of stakeholders over that period of time.
Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, a complete attempt at rewriting history again.

An Hon. Member: Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: The term limit policy was specifically in regard to work permits and a stating of how long someone could have a work permit. So, for the Honourable Member to try to draw the distinction is perfectly fine for him to attempt. But the public knows.
Understand the facts.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: They said one thing before an election, and they did the exact opposite. But what we did is that we said that we would consult on immigration policy. We remembered the mess of which they made of immigration policy.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: We committed to bipartisan reform. And we have followed through with that policy of bipartisan reform. The significant changes which started in consultation . . . Oh, they say that we have not. We just have not done the changes that *they* want, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Therein is the challenge. And if they want to go ahead and grant status, then they can go ahead. Take that case to the public and win an election.
But here is the challenge, Mr. Speaker. They did not. They refused to state what their policy was. But the public knows and understands.
So now, Mr. Speaker, let me try to get back to the Acting Leader of the Opposition's question.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See, they are getting all excited now, Mr. Speaker. All excited. All excited. We are speaking with the facts.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: *There will be no changes to term limit policy,* before the election. And after the election

there were changes to the term limit policy. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality. So, on this particular matter, Mr. Speaker, I think it is an expectation that persons who take up residency should have a working knowledge of the language of the land.

So, for the Honourable Member, if they have any concerns on what may have been laid out in the consultation, or if any persons who have made representation to them, or if any member of the business community who may be listening, or others, they should respond to the consultation and the Minister of Economy and Labour has a great record of taking matters that are replied to in consultation under consideration prior to the promulgation of the final policy.

The Speaker: Would you like your second supplementary or move on to a second question?

Mr. Ben Smith: Second supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Honourable Premier is . . . I guess the . . . I am trying to think of the way, because he does not want to answer my question. So, where we are . . . are there exceptions presently to the English speaking rule that have been highlighted? It looks like there is going to be an increased scrutiny on English speaking according to the Statement from the Minister. So, my question is are there exceptions that are presently happening in the community that the Premier would be able to speak to?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

I am not fully skilled with matters that are related to immigration policy. Those are matters that are related for the Minister of Economy and Labour on the specifics of which we ask. The Minister has informed me that there is an English speaking policy. I will again remind the Honourable Member that if there are questions or concerns regarding what has been put out in consultation that the Opposition has a chance to respond to the consultation. He, as a private citizen, a business owner, has an opportunity to respond to the consultation. Everyone has the opportunity to respond to the consultation. And those matters will be taken under advisement prior to the final promulgation of the policy.

The Speaker: Second question. You have used your two supplementaries, this is your second question.

QUESTION 2: SANDYS 360 FACILITY ACQUISITION UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier provide a detailed update on the government's acquisition of Sandys 360 facility? And what specific plans exist for redeveloping it for community use?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, no, I cannot.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Ben Smith: Considering how important that facility was to the West End, would the Premier be able to get information to provide to the House in the future?

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am sure we can, and I am sure those matters will lay under the Minister of Public Works. So, if there is a request for those particular matters, I am happy for the appropriate Minister to respond with those specific items. We do know that there was a proposal previously in 2018. Money was set aside in the budget for Sandys 360. There was a dispute with the trustees. I think the Honourable former Minister at that time did give a Statement to the House—which I am sure the Honourable Member was a Member of the House at that time—where he did state what the situation with Sandys 360 was. There has been an attempt at re-engagement, but I cannot provide an update at this time as I do not believe those matters have been finalised. If they are finalised . . . well, to my knowledge they are not finalised. If they are finalised, I am certain that the Honourable Minister responsible for Public Lands and Buildings, the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Environment, can provide an update.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Ben Smith: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Ben Smith: Would the Honourable Premier be able to at least let us know whether the purchase of Sandys 360 by the government has actually been completed?

Hon. E. David Burt: The answer is no.

The Speaker: Okay.

Third question?

Mr. Ben Smith: Third question.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 3: OTTIWELL SIMMONS ARBITRATION CENTRE UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, would the Honourable Premier be able to give us an update on the Ottiwell Simmons Arbitration Centre?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is no further update to report at this time.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ben Smith: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Ben Smith: Supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the numerous photo opportunities that were presented on that particular facility, can the Minister of Finance and the Honourable Premier give us any update on what is going to happen to that open lot that has become an eyesore? Considering that [there] has been a significant amount of time since everyone was told that that facility was going to be built.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Here is what I will say, Mr. Speaker. We remember the designs of the Opposition. Let me give you an example. There was a wonderful project called Morgan's Point.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: It was a project that they wanted to go ahead and construct.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: It was a project that they said is going to work.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is a project that they went ahead and put $165 million of taxpayer money up to go ahead and to support the development of this particular project without making sure that it could actually be sustained.

I will accept that there was an intention to build an arbitration centre, but what the Government said at the time, given our financial capabilities, is we wanted to ensure that we worked with the private sector so that it could be a viable project if we were unable to get to that space. So, the question is, should we follow their example, put up a building, put a government guarantee on it and then for it not to succeed?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: What I will say is, Mr. Speaker, that there is still an opportunity for those things to develop. But what we want to do is we want to make sure it is done right. We want to make sure it is done in conjunction with the private sector. We have spoken about matters related to arbitration. From that aspect we are not going to follow their mistake. We have a record of fiscal prudence, making sure that we do these things right and proper. And we are going to make sure that we are going to get it right. Unlike the mistakes that were made by the party opposite. There is a wonderful $200 million bill, of which says that we need to execute promises at all costs. We are going to make it and if things have to be adjusted and things have to change, we will make those decisions as we have done here. This is not the first time that update has been given.

The Speaker: Your supplementary?

Mr. Ben Smith: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition was able to show a public-private partnership with the airport. On time, on budget. So, my question is, can the Premier explain why he was unable to get a public-private partnership in place in order to get this facility built?

[Desk thumping and interjections]

The Speaker: Your second one?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is quite funny.

An Hon. Member: Forty-nine per cent of—

Hon. E. David Burt: The attempt once again to make comparisons where comparisons do not exist. The Honourable Member has raised the issue of the airport. Let us be clear, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. E. David Burt: An airport is an existing item that has an existing stream of revenue. Revenue which has been diverted from public sector now to the private sector.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And we know that the company of whom they signed agreement with has made over a 100 per cent profit already off the backs of the Bermudian taxpayer. While, Mr. Speaker, *while, while while,* Mr. Speaker—important point to note—while fares

continue to go up, and an agreement of which they made which ties to the rate of inflation.

And with global inflation that means that the bills are going higher and higher and higher, impeding our ability to continue to attract visitors to this country. That is their record, Mr. Speaker.

So now let me be clear on this one. It is a complete difference when talking about a new stream of revenue versus a guaranteed stream of revenue. And the only way that they were able to get the airport through, as he is talking about negotiations, was to guarantee the stream of revenue. How much money have we paid to Aecon underneath that, Mr. Speaker? Just shy of $50 million.

So, if the Honourable Member has money that he believes we should just put up for a guarantee on that particular point, then that is their perspective. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? That is the reason why they are in Opposition. And we are not going to make the same mistakes that they made, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

That concluded the Opposition Leader's question.

The next Member who would like to put his question to the Premier is MP De Couto.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This question is for the Honourable Premier, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, the Premier's Questions. The Premier's Questions.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: When will the tax reform—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I think this is an important topic. I am sure the Members on the other side will be interested.

The Speaker: Put your question, put your question.

QUESTION 1: TAX REFORM COMMISSION REPORT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: When will the Tax Reform Commission report be made available to the public? Thank you, Mr. Premier.

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Tax Reform Commission has said that they will be looking to deliver their report by the end of June, and I have not heard anything otherwise from the Tax Reform Commission to indicate that there will be a delay.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier did not actually answer my question, which was when is the Tax Reform Commission report planned to be made available to the public? But let me leave that there. My supplemental is, does the Government have a timeline for putting recommendations from the TRC report into effect, such as, producing draft legislation and attempting to pass it this year?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: That is certainly a question I can answer, Mr. Speaker. I answered the first one. He may not like the answer, but as the Honourable Member will know, the answer that is given is the answer that is given. And that is the way that parliamentary systems work. I know that I am learning him up, and I will continue to learn him up.

On this particular matter, Mr. Speaker, the Tax Reform Commission has indicated—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I will wait for them to stop, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Hon. E. David Burt: Because I am assuming they want the answer to the question.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Yes.

An Hon. Member: You guys are not setting a good example.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will wait for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of the Tax Reform Commission report, the expectation is that the report will be received prior to the end of the month. At that

point in time the Government will consider. We are already preparing the consultation documents to make sure that we can go to consultation in good time. The expectation is that we will have draft legislation that can go out to consultation in September and to make sure that any matters that are related to any possible qualified refundable tax credits or other matters and adjustments can be tabled in good time to be debated in this Honourable House and brought into legislative force before the end of the year.

The Speaker: Second supplementary? Or you are done?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you.

I will ask, just to be sure I am clear on the answer, does the Government intend to make any qualified refundable tax credits available for businesses to use in this financial year?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to prejudge what the Tax Reform Commission may do. The Honourable Member knows that I have been very careful not to prejudge. When we get the report, when we get what it is that they state, we will go ahead.

What I can state is that in the public spaces and otherwise we say that we are going to ensure that we put matters in place this year, as this is the first year that corporate income tax applies, so those matters can apply within the tax year. So, I hope that answers the question that he is trying to get at, but that is not a change from the Government's position, and it has been made very clear. We intend to ensure that these matters are legislated before the end of the year.

The timeline again, in case he did not get it, was when we receive the report from the Tax Reform Commission we will put those particular matters out to consultation, while at the same point in time work on matters related to draft legislation. Draft legislation itself will go out to consultation in good time for us to go ahead and table final legislation in the Legislature so that the matters can be passed before the end of the year.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That brings a close to the questions from MP De Couto.

MP Swan, I have you on the list for questions.

QUESTION 1: CUSTOM DUTY RATE CHANGES

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

Mr. Speaker, question: There has been some recent commentary about changes to customs duty rates that do not apply to plumbers and electricians. Could the Premier provide some clarity on this matter?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to provide clarity because it was quite—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No, he can answer. Come on.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will wait for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It is all right, I hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: No problem, Mr. Speaker. I am going to wait for them.

The Speaker: I can hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question because it is unfortunate that the cloud, I would say, was cast by Members Opposite on these particular matters, going out and saying that, you know, *plumbers have been excluded* and *electricians have been excluded* and this and that. All of which is not correct, Mr. Speaker. They had said things in regard to plumbing PVC pipes, flex wires (or what it is called), all these things were left out. That is not correct, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that there are a significant number of items which are captured in the customs duty changes that apply across the board to both the plumbing industry and also the electrical industry, as the intention of the Government was to ensure that the [duty rate] matters which are part of residential and/or commercial construction are reduced. So, the legislation does reduce duties to 10 per cent on a wide variety of items, such as steel piping, steel wire, plumbing fixtures, non-insulated copper wire.

There are a couple of categories, Mr. Speaker, which have been left out. As has been stated in public, we will happily bring those particular amendments. It is also important to note that there are some particular matters that were intentionally left out, which Members have heard representation from their supporters who have come to the Government as well saying that those things want to be included. Those are under a broad range of miscellaneous categories and those things will not all be excluded. Because there are representations for things like ceiling fans and others, Mr. Speaker, which are not going to be a part of this.

This is in regard to the work that is necessary for the building and construction. So, we need to make sure that we are—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to wait for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no. I can hear you.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is fine. I am going to wait for them.

The Speaker: The person that asked your question is—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I have got it. But I am going to wait for . . . I cannot think, Mr. Speaker. There is too much noise coming from that side.

The Speaker: He can hear you down the back.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to reduce taxes. But I think what is also important in this, Mr. Speaker, is the focus must also be that the work must also take place on public education otherwise to ensure that these savings are passed on to consumers. And I think that is a second part which I am sure Honourable Members Opposite will welcome the Government's work on this.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP, did you have a supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I should have declared my interest. I have worked as a plumber's assistant and am employed from my own trade sometimes. So, I thank the Premier for that answer.

I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Can the Honourable Premier outline what other reductions have been introduced to provide relief for Bermudians? And when will these reductions take effect?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The important thing to note is that the duty changes that we have mentioned will come into place on July 1st. That is important. In addition, the other customs duty rates will come into effect, such as the elimination of customs duty on motor vehicle parts, the further reduction on fuel duty (which I think is timely, given the inflammation of tensions of which we have seen in the Middle East) in addition to the reduction in mobile phone taxes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary? No. Okay.

The next Member on the list is MP L. Smith.

QUESTION 1: BANNER ADVERTISING GUIDANCE

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

I am sure the Premier spends probably more time than we do traveling around the Island and can probably see what we see. So, my question is in relation to what we are seeing, which is a proliferation of very large banner advertisings all over the roadways, on buildings, on construction fences, on the side of bus shelters. As a matter of fact, as we sit here today there are nine banners at the intersection of Tee Street and Middle Road and they are surrounding a sign that says it is a frequent accident spot. And there are 11 banners at the Paget traffic lights.

I do not know if the Premier is aware, but it does not seem like any particular department is in charge of providing guidance or doing anything about this. My understanding is that there is an inter-ministerial committee that is looking at that. And my question is, when can the public expect to see there being some guidance or something done about that?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will welcome the Honourable Member to this Chamber and thank her for the question which she has raised, which is certainly something that has seen, I guess I would say a disturbing proliferation that we have seen. It has gone from a small amount to an increasingly large amount.

The reality is that these measures are governed under the Advertisements Regulation Act 1911. But as you can imagine, that is a very old Act. It is when we used to do regulations inside of Acts way back in 1911. The Throne Speech did speak to the repealing of that particular Act and the changing and updating of that. Those matters are not being done by an inter-ministerial committee, so the Honourable Member is misinformed. Those matters are squarely under the responsibility of the Minister of Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation, who is looking and reviewing those particular matters.

But they are under the Advertisements Regulation Act [1911]. It is an Act that needs to be updated because this is an Act that bans many things. You know, the Advertisements Regulation Act means that signs on buildings cannot be bigger than 12 inches tall. And I can name many, many, many buildings in the city of Hamilton that have logos of companies, et cetera, all the rest, which are technically out of step. This is something that has not necessarily been enforced. The Minister will certainly engage on that particular matter with consultation and an update will be provided.

I will say that there is a proliferation of these matters. It is challenging. We want to make sure that we strike the right balance because we recognise that

what is currently being seen, whether by event promoters or others, is the need and desire to reach the public so they can advertise various events. That means that on a number of matters they may not be seeing that they are getting the appropriate penetration through our local media landscape. And the other challenge is that with digital advertising nowadays, the reality is also that a lot of that money will actually go overseas to places like Facebook and Google and Meta, et cetera, and other online platforms.

So, there is something that needs to be done. The Minister of Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation is doing it. And I would certainly welcome, and I am sure the Minister would welcome, any suggestions that Honourable Members Opposite may have in regard to that. But I am sure that there will be a consultation and Members can certainly participate.

I thank the Member for her question. It is something the Government is looking at. It is something that we need to make sure that we deal with. Because it seems as though they were in a few places and now they are everywhere. I was quite surprised when I came out of one place and I was like, *oh, they put signs there too.* It is getting bad. So, I accept the Honourable Member, and the Government does have plans to tackle it under the Minister of Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier give us a sense of a timeline for when we can see something happening here? And I actually did, just for clarification, speak to people within government departments trying to find somebody and obviously it is in a period of shift right now. But I know the public would like to know when there is going to be some guidance about this.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

To answer the Honourable Member's question, it is a matter that is currently being worked on. So, it is not a question of we are going to plan on looking at in the future. It was a commitment that was made in the Throne Speech in 2024.

As I informed this Honourable House, matters that were in the 2024 Throne Speech have been carried over even though they were not mentioned in the 2025 Throne Speech as there was not a lot of time between those particular speeches. That is currently being worked on right now for the Honourable Members.

And all of those things, as I said, are governed under the Advertisements Regulation Act, but the Advertisements Regulations Act 1911 is well out of date and needs to be updated, of course. We will be keeping in touch. And if you wish you can happily speak to the Minister responsible for Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation. [He] can give the Honourable Member the information she requires.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you very much.

As we are waiting for this to be done, what is going to be done about the banners that are out there right now that will expire, because the event will have taken place? There are a lot of them around the Cup Match period and even around this weekend. Who is responsible for taking them down?

Hon. E. David Burt: I appreciate the Honourable Member's question, and I will ask the Minister of Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation to respond to that, Honourable Member, specifically on those particular points.

I think in the interim while we are reviewing this particular legislation, I think there should be a very clear expectation that persons who are involved in these particular activities after the events are done should at least take the banners down at a minimum. But we need to make sure that we get guidance around this and there are precious resources, so it is not like I want to, you know, take the police off of gang targeting intervention to go and do things. So, there is a delicate balance here. Laws are meant to be enforced by the police. The Advertisements Regulation Act is also supposed to be enforced by police, but we have to always take that balance.

So, I understand what the Honourable Member is saying, and I will certainly ask her to speak to the Minister of Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have had your two supplementaries.

The next person on the list will be Government Whip MP Tyrrel.

Would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: CORPORATE INCOME TAX PROJECTIONS

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of recent commentary on corporate income tax, especially for some from the Opposition and the local media, regarding the projected revenue outlined in this year's budget. Can the Honourable Premier provide clarity on how those projections were determined and whether he remains comfortable in their reliability?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. There is an unfortunate note of

uncertainty that has attempted to be put into the public domain on this. I am not going to blame the Opposition on this. I will try to blame *The Royal Gazette*. The reality is that there is a lot of talk and chatter related to legislation that is pending in the US House of Representatives. I want to make it clear for yourself, Mr. Speaker, and for Honourable Members that that legislation does not target Bermuda's corporate income tax regime.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, Premier, unfortunately, Members, the time has run out for the Premier's Questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We will now move on to the regular Question Period, which is 60 minutes. And we will start with the written questions that have been submitted. I think the written questions all require oral responses. The written questions were from MP De Couto, and I believe they are to the Premier.

Would you like to put your questions now?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY'S 2024 BUSINESS PLAN REGULATORY INITIATIVES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please inform this Honourable House of the current status of several regulatory initiatives identified in the Bermuda Monetary Authority's 2024 Business Plan? Specifically, the framework for designating Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) compliant funds, digital identity pre-consultation, basic banking services draft proposals, Appeals Tribunal Framework alignment, and embedded supervision for DeFi, none of which were substantively reported in the Authority's Annual Report 2024?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Opposition Leader for the questions which he raised which are being asked by the Shadow Minister of Finance to allow me an opportunity to clarify these particular matters.

First, it is a very long question, but I will respond. I will just state that for the purposes of easing the House management for questions that are requesting such a detailed response, in the future it might be better for the Honourable Members Opposite to submit these questions in writing for written answers.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, in response to the question: Designated Environment and Social Governance (ESG) compliant funds. In 2024, the Bermuda Monetary Authority undertook extensive research into sustainability and climate-related standards to identify strategic opportunities for enhancing our investment fund regime. This work provided critical insights that informed the adoption of a "building blocks" approach, a phased strategy to systematically integrate sustainability considerations into the regulatory framework as a foundational step. The focus in [2025] will be on expanding sustainability related disclosure requirements. This initial measure aims to mitigate the risk of greenwashing and lay the groundwork for future sustainability-related framework enhancements. Given the shifting global policy landscape regarding this topic, including Bermuda's major trading partners, the Authority is also monitoring global sentiment trends which have, and will continue to have, influence on the pace at which the Authority progresses this initiative.

On matters related to the proposed digital identify service provider regime. Pre-consultation took place in 2024, a matter of public record, and the initial public consultation period on the provided DSP regime closed on the 10 January 2025, which is outside the time of the annual report. But I am sure Honourable Members, especially the Opposition Leader who has familiarity with the Bermuda Monetary Authority, knows that that closed at that point in time with substantial feedback provided. The Authority reviewed the feedback, and its stakeholder response letter was published on the Bermuda Monetary Authority website on the 29 April 2025, which is a matter of public record.

The Authority has now begun developing legislative proposals based on the positions communicated in the stakeholder letter and intends to begin further consultation on that proposal in July of 2025. In due course, a finalised proposal will be sent to the Ministry of Finance with a view to having the Bill drafted for implementation before the end of 2025. The development of associated secondary instruments, in particular dealing with cyber risk, has commenced. These instruments will be finalised and consulted on after primary legislative proposals are complete. Throughout this process the Authority has committed to remaining engaged in dialogue with the relevant government and industry stakeholders.

On matters related to basic banking services pre-consultation engagement, our initial proposals related to this, and the Ministry of Finance initiative has taken place with the relevant stakeholders. Feedback provided in the consultative process is now in review. For your information, we did go out to the banks, tell them what it is that we are going to do. They have replied back with their comments. We have further comments in from the banks. The Ministry of Finance will work with the Bermuda Monetary Authority in order to produce those. That is a Throne Speech initiative, and the intention is to make sure that the matters are legislated within this parliamentary session.

Moving on to the Appeals Tribunal regime. The first phase of consultation process with the private sector, together with the Chief Justice, has been completed. Given that the new framework covers different

appeals regimes under different regulatory Acts. Feedback provided on the context remains in review. And what it has to do, Mr. Speaker, is go back out to consultation now that we have draft Bills in place.

Moving on to embedded supervision for DeFi pilots. The call for proposals for vetted supervision pilots closed successfully on the 30 April 2025. The Authority is now in the final stages of evaluating submissions and confirming participants with pilot deployment slated to begin before year end and a public report to be issued shortly thereafter.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second question, Mr. Speaker. No supplementals.

The Speaker: Okay. Your second question. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA STOCK EXCHANGE (BSX) DECLINE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please advise this Honourable House what actions the Government is taking in response to the reported 13.8 per cent decline in—

The Speaker: Uh . . . Okay, go ahead. Yes, yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Sorry.

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: In response to the report 13.8 per cent decline in ILS listings on the BSX, and how it intends to protect Bermuda's global leadership in this critical market?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to note that Bermuda's global leadership is being protected and inside of that particular report it did outline that we have over a 90 per cent share of global listings. So, it is difficult for us to say that we are somehow losing our global dominance in this when we continue to have over 90 per cent of the market.

Nonetheless, it is clearly evident that other persons, in many instances where Bermuda has a lead, are jealous of what it is that we are doing and trying to replicate this. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that Bermuda does remain the dominant jurisdiction for insurance-linked securities [ILS] structures, evidenced by its holding of over a 90 per cent market share of global outstanding Cat bond issuances. The Bermuda Stock Exchange continues to support efficient listing services for the ILS market.

The decline in ILS listings is primarily attributed to the maturity and redemption of the issuances notes in the normal course of the ILS market cycle and, to a lesser extent, the reduction in issuances of mortgage ILS. That said, Bermuda continues to see an uptake of other forms of alternative capital, namely collateralised insurers. A number of jurisdictions are attempting to become ILS centres. Notwithstanding the increased competition, the decrease in listings is not a Bermuda specific issue, given that Bermuda's global market share remains above 90 per cent.

Furthermore, the Bermuda Monetary Authority consistently supports the ILS market by taking actions that ensure Bermuda remains attractive. Such actions include facilitating fit for purpose regulation, introducing the three-day approval process for certain ILS structures and recently exploring how emerging risks can be more effectively facilitated. In this particular regard, the BMA has today registered three issuances of 144A cyber bonds, representing a significant milestone for the alternative capital market in Bermuda as it seeks to facilitate new product lines to address protection gaps in the market.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: For the Honourable Premier, could he please confirm whether the Ministry or Authority has conducted a formal impact assessment on how our jurisdiction compares to other jurisdictions for these products in respect to competitiveness?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We do appreciate the short, concise answers, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Premier provide a brief summary of that assessment? Or where it may be found?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that we are not going to publish a competitive analysis in the public domain around the comparisons of which we have done to other jurisdictions. But what I can say in my particular answer is that some of the things are noted. We are streamlining some matters such as the introduction of three-day approval process for certain

ILS structures in response to persons who are trying to compete for this particular matter. The Bermuda Monetary Authority, as evidenced in their annual report, is continuing their strong growth, continuing their continued advocacy. It as a well-resourced body, as we can tell from the wonderful compensation levels that were revealed inside of their annual reports.

But they do have the human resources necessary to go ahead and respond, to continue to foster innovation, and we will respond to the market in kind as we have done on this and will continue to do.

So, I am not going to share the results of competitive analysis. If the Honourable Member wants to know specifically, I know that he works inside that industry, he may have knowledge and industry is always consulted whether it is the people who do these issuances, whether BSX and others, on what other bodies are doing. And the Bermuda Monetary Authority works to see what we can do to ensure that Bermuda remains the place that has over the 90 per cent share of this global business.

Over 90 per cent.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Second supplementary? Or your third question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, third question, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go head.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY'S 2024 CYBER RISK STRATEGY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier please inform this Honourable House whether the BMA's year 2024 cyber strategy has led to measurable improvements in the cybersecurity of Bermuda's financial sector and whether the Ministry has received any formal reports or updates confirming such.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Authority's 2024 cyber strategy builds on previous years extensive efforts in cyber risk management. The Cyber Code for the insurance sector was launched in 2021, followed by cyber codes for banks and corporate service providers, trust companies and money service businesses in 2022, and digital asset businesses in 2023. The Digital Asset Business (Cyber Risk) Rules were updated in 2024. All of these combined initiatives outline the cyber risk management regulatory requirements that various financial sectors must comply with. Data is collected every year on the cyber annual returns to actually filing to assess the cybersecurity posture or readiness of regulated entities and to measure progress based on the information obtained.

The Authority publishes the Insurance Sector Operational Cyber Risk Management Report annually. This report represents year-on-year trend analysis and comparisons to highlight the improvements made by regulated entities. The report is published on the BMA website for the benefit of the financial services industry, the wider jurisdiction, and also the Opposition, and has been published annually since 2018.

The Ministry of Finance has received quarterly updates from the Authority on the overall cyber risk outlook and its joint efforts with the Ministry to assess jurisdictional risks within the financial services sector. These updates include risk trends.

In addition, in the first half of this year, the BMA launched the consultation on the Operational Resilience and Outsourcing Code with regulatory requirements for continuing to strengthen the financial sector's broader aspects of resilience.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Honourable Premier advise whether the Ministry has reviewed or acted upon any recommendations from the Authority's cyber risk assessments that would require cross-government coordination?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Monetary Authority regulates the financial services sector. So, it is not a matter for the Government and cross-ministry on the matters related to that. They publish the rules, they publish the items, they get the returns, they publish the annual reports and financial services companies that may be lacking in certain areas have those matters that are done by the Bermuda Monetary Authority. That is not a Government matter for the regulation of financial services companies.

The Speaker: Supplementary, second?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I would like to perhaps clarify the first supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Because the original question, in fact—

The Speaker: You could reword it in your second supplementary.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, okay.

Given that the first question with respect to Ministry reports from the Bermuda Monetary Authority

on cybersecurity of Bermuda's financial sector, given those reports and feedback from the Bermuda Monetary Authority, which the Minister was kind enough to inform us about, has the Ministry or Government had to undertake any cross-government coordination in response to those reports or advice?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is not piecing together what I am saying.

The Bermuda Monetary Authority handles cyber risks for the regulated financial services sector of the country. That is completely different from what may happen with the other bodies that manage cybersecurity for the total country, and also internally to the government. But as the Honourable Member will be aware, or maybe not . . . Well, he was in the Senate when we passed the matters related to cybersecurity. He would know that the Bermuda Monetary Authority plays a part of the existing structures that exist for the total governance of cybersecurity in the country. So, in answer to his question, that would be a process but that is not something that comes out of the risk reports that come to the Ministry of Finance.

The risk reports that come to the Ministry of Finance are at a high level, which are part of the Financial Policy Council matters which form the overall risk matters that we assess on a quarterly basis. But on the technical aspects, those are handled through other bodies, through legislation which we have passed in this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is the conclusion of your second supplementary.

That brings us to a conclusion of the written questions that were submitted. We now move on to questions from the Statements that were given this morning. The first Statement that has questions is today's Statement from the Minister of Economy and Labour in regard to the labour survey.

The first question is from MP Tucker.

MP Tucker, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPORT MAY 2024

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

My question is, I would like to know what industries and positions are most in demand by employers.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, while that information is not found in the results of the Labour Force Survey, the results will be contained in the annual Employment Survey data. Each year in the Employment Survey, we have detailed tabulations. In those tables you will find positions held by Bermudians and positions held by non-Bermudians. The way in which we view occupational categories and demand is if they have a high percentage of non-Bermudians in those particular areas. It indicates to us that there is a supply of jobs in that area and a shortage of Bermudian skill sets in those areas. That information is public information that can be found in the annual Employment Survey briefs or tabulations.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

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

And I thank the Minister for the answer. I will certainly find the report. Maybe my second question—

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary or new question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: It is a second question.

The Speaker: Second question, okay.

QUESTION 2: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPORT MAY 2024

Ms. Robin Tucker: It is a second question. I would like to know if the Labour Force Survey gives any information about the success rate of any of the referral programmes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Labour Force Survey has been tabled in this House, which means all the information contained in the survey is public information that the Member can peruse through to determine whether or not there is a gap in the data that she would like to see and the data that is actually presented.

But to be abundantly clear, the Labour Force Survey would not have data as it pertains to referrals from the Department of Workforce Development. However, in the budget period, I did report on the success rates of the referrals through the Department of Workforce Development from an annual highlights standpoint.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: This is a supplementary question, I think.

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know, as it relates to success rates, how the actual success rates have been determined. What metrics are being used to determine the success of the programmes being implemented?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, in the Budget Book, we have performance indicators. Those are the main metrics we use for reporting performance from the various departments that fall underneath the Ministry of Economy and Labor. But what I would say as it pertains to referrals, a successful referral is a referral that leads to an actual job. And I have reported publicly the number of contacts that were made through the Department of Workforce Development and the number of successful referrals in the last fiscal period during the budget period.

The Speaker: Okay.

Second supplementary or third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: It is a second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would just like to know, the Minister indicated that a successful referral would be sort of determined by the individual getting a job. What I am wondering, though, is if he can give some information about . . . is there any timeline? If someone gets a job today and gets fired in two weeks, is that considered a successful referral versus someone that may be in a job for a year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Workforce Development works to prepare people and connect people with jobs. We also provide wrap-around services to improve the success rate of persons being retained in the workforce.

A person is dismissed from the workforce for a number of reasons. However, if the Department of Workforce Development is able to connect an individual with a job, we have to view that as a success. If the person is then terminated from the job for various reasons, it does hurt the integrity of the programme.

But, notwithstanding that, that data allows us to ensure that we continue to provide the additional skill sets outside of the competency training for the particular occupation that allows one to be successful in the workplace. And that is why we have the emotional intelligence, understanding your personal brand, all of those things. The work ethic training. All of those things that would allow one to maintain employment into the long term. And we do a very good job as it pertains to ensuring that we have a robust programme that better prepares persons for the world of work.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No further questions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, you also have questions for the statement from MP King.

MP King, good morning.

QUESTION 1: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPORT MAY 2024

Mr. Robert King: In the Labour [Force] Survey data that was from the report that you provided, if I understand correctly, there was an 11 per cent reduction in unemployment for the age group 16 to 24 from 13.3 per cent to 2.4 per cent. And that reduction was attributed to the persons not seeking employment and/or potentially going off Island. Is that correct?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: That statement and that question has a number of things that is incorrect. If the unemployment rate moves from 13 per cent down to 2 per cent, that is much more than an 11 per cent decline in unemployment for that particular age group. Can we accept that to be a reality?

The second thing is the Statement makes it abundantly clear that we have more young persons working. That is the reason why youth unemployment has declined. The Honourable Member has introduced a new category of persons leaving the Island, which was not a feature of my Statement. There were two features of my Statement. One, there was an increase in individuals working and a decrease in individuals seeking employment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: So, I understand that the unemployment rate went from 13.3 per cent to 2.4 per cent. So, you are right in terms of the calculation of that.

How many of the persons who were not choosing to seek employment . . . because that was a

statement that you made that was attributing to some of the reduction as well. How many of those persons are now receiving financial assistance?

Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The survey does not capture the data on persons who may be on financial assistance.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or a second question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that the purpose is to find suitable employment and have persons retained in the employment market, it would suggest that those statistics should be captured because we want to make sure that persons are exiting the system. So, is that going to be a part of the statistics that are collected in the future?

Thank you. That is my final question. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it abundantly clear what actually is captured.

What is captured is Bermuda's unemployment rate has declined. That is extremely positive. What is captured is that more Bermudians are working. That is extremely positive. What is captured is that Bermuda's youth unemployment rate has fallen from over 30 per cent now down to under 5 per cent.

An Hon. Member: Yes, that is positive.

Hon. Jason Hayward: That is positive. What is positive is that the median income of those working in Bermuda has increased. What is captured is that in the majority of age categories we have an increase of persons working in Bermuda. That is positive. And so, the survey seeks to get a picture of how our employment is trending. Our employment data indicates that our employment is trending in a positive direction. And that is what this actual report highlights.

The Speaker: Thank you.

And you had indicated that would be your last question, right? Yes. You indicated that was your last question? Yes, okay.

Thank you, Minister. No further questions for that Statement.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Home Affairs in reference to her Statement on the cost of living.

MP Fahy would like to put a question.

QUESTION 1: COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025 SURVEY INSIGHTS AND PLANS

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

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Minister's first Statement, she made mention of the fact that there were two surveys mentioned. One was the Cost of Living Survey. How were those . . . sorry. Get my eyes better here, Mr. Speaker, sorry. What was the cost of those surveys that the Minister mentioned in her Statement and which company conducted these two surveys mentioned in that Statement?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The surveys were done via an online free platform that the Government of Bermuda's Communications Department already has a profile or platform, and they used that to be able to input the questions that the Ministry of Home Affairs submitted for public consultation, specific to the Cost of Living Summit.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Is there any way to confirm that there were not multiple respondents . . . sorry, one person doing multiple answers on that online survey?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The survey was restricted to only enable one participant per survey to present a response.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

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

In relation to that same portion of the Statement, the Minister made mention of focus groups. I am wondering how those attendees on those focus groups were selected. Would the Minister provide the listing of those who attended those focus groups?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, the focus group respondents were specific to the business community and so recognising that there were very clear, or proposed areas of focus and interest, related to the costs—namely, housing, food costs—persons who were stakeholders in those businesses were engaged with in order to provide input. They were also invited to provide a response to the general business survey,

cost of doing business survey. So that is how they were selected.

And the question regarding the list. Upon tabling of the full survey findings for both reports, the public report as well as the business survey, the names of the respondents will be included.

The Speaker: Okay.

Second question now.

QUESTION 2: COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025 SURVEY INSIGHTS AND PLANS

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

The Minister made mention in her Statement of—and I will just read it out so that we are on the same page, there is a "clear call from both the public for broader and more targeted interventions." Would the Minister be able to provide a full understanding and a comprehensive summary of what those targeted interventions may look like?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

In the survey findings, once the report is tabled, it will include a comprehensive list of what the actual survey responses included. In my Statement, however, I included a list of a few. Namely, tax and other relief for essential goods and services.

The Speaker: First sub or your second question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Those broader targeted interventions then are presumably based on the feedback that had come from the focus groups and surveys. Is that correct?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That is a supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes, it is a supplementary. Your first supplementary on your second question.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right.

Would you like a second supplementary on that question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third question?

QUESTION 3: COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025 SURVEY INSIGHTS AND PLANS

Hon. Michael Fahy: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

In relation to the summit that is to be held next Tuesday *[sic]*, 25th, 2025, I noted yesterday that there was, I think, an attempt at allowing people to register. Can the Minister give some advice to the communities to help people, the members of the public, register before the summit on the 25th of June.

Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Persons can express their Interest to attend the summit via the Cost of Living website, it is costofliving.com.bm.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: In relation to the summit, what are the numbers of people that are actually able to attend? If people just have to express interest and are they then selected by the Ministry? And that question is asked as a result of the fact that the Statement also says that there are key stakeholders who have already been invited. I would like to know, as well, the list of the stakeholders.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The summit has sought to engage those who are decision makers in the first instance to be able to have the impact of lowering costs as business owners and operators. We speak specifically to the strategy, Mr. Speaker, associated with having both a cost of living public survey and a cost of doing business survey for businesses.

Recognising that the Government does not control all businesses and definitely does not control or have an interest in the cost of goods as received on the shelf, we note the importance of having the decision makers of those entities in the room.

We have engaged with them, and so the number of persons that has been confirmed is based on the capacity. Once all of the stakeholders and decision makers have confirmed, the additional spots will be available for the public to attend. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there will also be a live stream to allow those who may be at work or otherwise cannot attend to also watch and participate.

Thank you.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Yes, so, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide a list of those stakeholders? The Minister has said decision makers, who are they?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The stakeholders represent the areas of focus for the summit. Namely, food, housing. There are also Ministerial presentations as part of this. So, the comprehensive list is not available at this time for me to read off, but those areas will be included as part of the summit. I also neglected to discuss imports, as well as utilities will also be part of the discussion. So, stakeholders in those sectors.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have asked your supply of questions. Thank you.

The next Member who has questions for you, Minister, is MP Smith.

Would you like to put your questions?

Ms. Linda Smith: I will withdraw my questions.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP Pearman, would you like to still put your questions?

QUESTION 1: COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025 SURVEY INSIGHTS AND PLANS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Honourable Minister Lightbourne for her Statement to this Honourable House this morning on Bermuda's cost of living and survey insights and plans for this Cost of Living Summit. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to quote two points from the Statement.

It was said to this Honourable House that quote, "Government remains committed to advancing targeted evidence based reforms that enhance affordability, protect consumers and promote fairness." So, reforms.

And over the page, page two, quote, "the Ministry has built on the work of existing reports and led its own public engagement efforts, including the completion of two national surveys."

In view of the efforts described to this Honourable House in your Statement, Minister, what would you say is the one most important reform the Government anticipates will bring down the cost of living in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Okay.

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

Frankly, the cost of living can come down through stakeholder and Government collaboration. Recognising that Government actually cannot carry this weight alone. We have already advanced tax reduction through our most recent budget.

We have evidenced our work actually towards cost of living. This summit actually represents an opportunity for members of the public as well as stakeholders to represent their way of meeting the Government, recognising that there is a need amongst our community.

And so, each of us who are gathering in this Honourable House have constituents who are feeling the weight of this burden. So, the fruit of the summit is seeking to also see evidence of that collaboration as well, if you were to identify one amongst a list of others.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is that a supplementary or a new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, yes, supplementary, please.

Thank you, Honourable Minister. If I understood you correctly, the answer you gave to the one most important reform to bring down the cost of living was collaboration with the private sector?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: If I were to list one, yes.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no further questions, thanks.

The Speaker: No further questions. Okay.

Minister, that is the end of questions for your statement this morning.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is your second Statement in reference to the negative resolution.

MP De Couto, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2022 (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) REGULATIONS 2023 -AND- ELECTRICITY (INNOVATIVE LICENCE) REGULATIONS 2023 NEGATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Minister for the information in her Statement about the regulations to the Electricity Act.

My question is, has the Ministry or RA received any specific, I will call, material expressions of intent to make use of these innovative regulations for innovative electricity generation?

Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, yes, the Ministry and the RA have received expressions of interest.

Recognising that actually the RA manages the entire process associated with these innovative licenses.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplementary, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Could the Honourable Minister let us know roughly how many expressions of interest and what sorts of technologies or types of innovative types of generation are involved?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, technology that I am aware of since my time in office includes floating solar. Wave technology has also been the presentations of which I have become aware of. Recognising that there were submissions and expressions previously, I can seek to get a full list of those who have expressed interest in the innovative licences, and I will provide that to the Honourable Member.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second question? Second question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2022 (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) REGULATIONS 2023 -AND- ELECTRICITY (INNOVATIVE LICENCE) REGULATIONS 2023 NEGATIVE RESOLUTIONS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Have there been any submissions regarding the use of natural gas?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of clarification: submissions or expressions of interest?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, thank you, my apologies.

Expressions of interest or applications or anybody coming forth wanting to use that technology.

Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I am unaware of an LNG expression of interest at this time.

The Speaker: Supplementary? No further questions. Okay. Thank you.

Minister, that is the end of questions for yours today.

The next Statement this morning is the Statement from the Minister of Tourism, Transport and Culture in regard to National Heroes Day.

MP Robinson, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL HEROES DAY 2025: RECOGNISING LEGACY AND COMMUNITY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Being as there were 25 applications made and none considered this year, I just wanted to ask for the aid of the listening public, whether or not a fulsome release of the credentials being looked for by the committee will be made public? And if there is not already, where can folks find that information?

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

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

The deliberations were done by the committee led by the chair. What I received was a report in the form of a letter which outlined the process they went through and the decision that they made. I do not think the Act requires them to go into details of their deliberation. And I would caution that, Mr. Speaker, as it is very difficult to find individuals or members of the public to serve on these committees because they already do know that their decisions will be highly scrutinised by the public.

What we have seen in the past from both sides of the House, if I am going to be honest, is political jockeying back and forth about these decisions and why they are made in the past. Which is why we went down this road of rewriting the legislation. Which is why the One Bermuda Alliance also have, by way of the Opposition Leader, a member on that committee. So, I would welcome the Member from the other side to have a discussion maybe with the individual that was put on the committee by the Opposition Leader so that he can maybe get some insight on how the process went and the deliberations.

I think that is the spirit, Mr. Speaker, as to why that was done and why the House, both Houses, agreed on this legislation. I think that if the Honourable Member and the Opposition wished to get into the details of the deliberations they can talk to their representative on the committee. But I have no plans to make it public, and I do not think that it will be in the best interest of the public to go down that road because we may not be able to find citizens willing to sit on these committees going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Or new question. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I want to state as well that I respect the bipartisanship of the committee and was not trying to challenge that.

The supplementary I am bringing forward is not for the deliberations, but because we had 25 nominations and none were accepted, I think it might beg the question that maybe we provide at least a light framework of what is being looked for in being a National Hero so those nominations can be at least aligned with some of the things that the committee is looking for. I do not think that it needs to go into the deliberations made by the committee, but just to give a bit of guidance with for the public.

The Speaker: Okay. Minister.

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

I will remind the Honourable Member from the other side that the framework, the light framework, the heavy framework is in the Act. So, the framework is laid out, Mr. Speaker. And in the Statement, I did say (I cannot remember what page it was) that the committee and the chair have recommended that they reconvene to discuss if there are any other awards (maybe not at this level) that some of these nominees will be able to fall under. So, I think in time . . . I think it is only right that we allow this committee to do what they have asked to do: Come back and reconvene to have further deliberations on maybe other types of awards. Which you see in other jurisdictions as well.

I believe that where the Honourable Member from the other side is going at, and the question that he wants to be asked and answered and put in the public domain, and even who those nominees were, will come out when the committee reconvenes for these deliberations on other recognitions and awards. Remember the committee is called the Naming and Recognition Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: A supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. A second supplementary.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I just would like to clarify that the Bill does stipulate the nomination process. It does stipulate the makeup of the board, but not necessarily anything specific as to what is being looked for. Except for how folks may qualify such as, you know, being posthumously nominated and different things like that.

So, I guess my final question on this will just be some of the community . . . when we talk about the National Hero, a lot of people have different interpretations. And what I am trying to get at is, how do we make sure that folks in the public can submit without feeling as though they have not been considered or that their particular nomination did not make the jump when many may believe that one of their 25 nominations did make it?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And that is the truth. Yes, I agree.

An Hon. Member: So, anybody can think of National Heroes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my point that, you know, I think we might want to condense the idea of a National Hero in the eyes of the public to avoid any confusion.

The Speaker: Okay. So that is your question to the Minister.

Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I have to be honest. I am not sure I understand if there was a question in there and . . . I am glad that you did give leeway to the Honourable Member from the other side to make his comments and his opinions but with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I heard a question in there.

The Speaker: Basically, he was just trying to narrow down the criteria. Is that the word I am looking for?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

Any other question on that?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, that's fine.

Do you have any further questions?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I have a new question.

The Speaker: A new question, okay.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Is this your third question or fourth?

The Speaker: Second question. Second question.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Second question.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL HEROES DAY 2025: RECOGNISING LEGACY AND COMMUNITY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: She's having fun, she's having fun.

So, the legislation does stipulate that it will be considered every 10 years past this point. I just wanted a slight bit of clarity. With there not being a National Hero nominated in this particular round, does that mean that there will not be any consideration for new submissions going forward until 10 years from now?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

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

As noted in the Statement, the next available time for the public to submit nominations for a National Hero would be in the fall of 2034.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any supplementary or third question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary with your leave, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Does that mean, Minister, that the current 25 submissions will be remaining on the table for the committee to consider over the next 10 years or not?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, the way the Act is laid out, in 10 years' time, new applications will be received and new submissions will be considered. And if individuals who submitted these 25 this time wish to resubmit with maybe more evidence—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —there may be public campaigns leading up to the nomination period that will be accepted at the appropriate time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or . . . has everyone finished their questions? Okay.

Thank you, Members.

Minister, that completes questions on that Statement. The next Statement that has a question is the Statement from the Minister of Health.

Minister, you have a question from MP Tucker.

MP Tucker.

[Pause]

QUESTION 1: MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know, What is the timeline for review of the Mental Health Act and how will stakeholders, including services providers and advocacy groups be involved in the process?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for that question.

As part of the Adult Mental Health Integrated Care Pathway recommendations, one of the long-term goals was to review and amend the mental health legislation. And what we will do is similar to when we made the amendments (I want to say in 2017 when we added the consent to treatment orders and the like). We had wide consultation with all stakeholders as it related to the amendments. So, we will repeat that process that was done previously when we made those amendments.

But the hope and objective is to start that process within the summer and then we will hope to have some legislation tabled within the year.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Oh, I might add also it will be largely modelled after the United Kingdom's legislation, and it will provide for more human rights issues as it relates to persons challenged with mental health as well as treatment orders and the like. So, we will be modelling it off the United Kingdom legislation and we are looking to commence that activity in the fall.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

QUESTION 2: MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

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

Relatedly, how will the Government expand trauma counselling and intervention services, particularly to youth victims of violence and those affected by domestic violence?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my Statement did not specifically speak to trauma as it relates to persons with respect to domestic violence. But what I can add is that pursuant to the $2.29 million that was provided to the Ministry of Health during the midterm budget review, and that money was also extended to us during this past budget and as was discussed a couple weeks ago when we did the budget debate, we will continue to provide resources to our community partners who provide mental health treatment such as the Family Centre, MASC and the Women's Resource Centre so that they can continue to provide treatment to persons that are requiring same and that limited financial resources is not a prohibitor for them to be able to receive access to treatment.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Just a supplementary question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: I brought up the issue of domestic violence and victims of violence and youth specifically because all of those issues do have some impact on one's mental health. And not only those individuals impacted but those family members and everybody that's connected.

What I would like to know is if any consideration, additional consideration, will be given to those specific entities as it relates to any updates to the Mental Health Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated when we do the amendments to the Mental Health Act, we will do it similarly to what we did in 2017 when we made those initial three amendments with respect to consent orders, treatment and the like. And we extended wide consultation to persons that were in this mental health space—whether it be persons that are, . . . sorry, organisations that relate specifically to domestic violence like the Women's Resource Centre who have received grant funding from the Ministry of Health to provide services and ensure that access is not denied for lack of financial resources by the individual client seeking.

We will continue the process as it relates to stakeholder engagement similarly to what we did in 2017 when we made the amendments previously.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or new question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Just a supplementary . . . just a point I guess I would just ask the Minister to clarify for me.

I just wanted to get clarification on whether when speaking of stakeholders, and of course in relation to the grants as she mentioned related to Women's Resource Centre and the like, will there be broader stakeholder engagement or specific to those entities that are getting funding?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

I invite that Honourable Member to look at the stakeholder consultation that took place in 2017 and it would probably be able to provide her with more commentary insofar as the path forward.

We will continue the engagement as previously—it will simply not be those entities that receive financial support from the Ministry of Health. There are a number of partners within our community that are in this space . . . individuals with life experiences, shared experiences and like. It will be wide stakeholder consultation akin to the report that was done in 2017 prior to the amendments to the Mental Health Act.

The Speaker: Thank you. Third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank the Minister for that clarification. That's what I was looking for clarification. So, thank you.

The Speaker: Third question?

QUESTION 3: MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES: BUILDING RESILIENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

Ms. Robin Tucker: My third question is, Are there plans to modernise other related legislations such as the Young Offenders Act and . . .

The Speaker: That may not necessarily have been included in the Statement today. The Statement was specific to mental health.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just asking that question as it relates to looking at the Mental Health Act overall.

The Speaker: Okay. All right.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Are there any related legislations that they are also looking . . . that will inform the Mental Health Act or that the Mental Health Act will inform.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to that insofar as it does come under the auspices of another Ministry. However, where there is a need for collaboration to ensure that the Mental Health Act and the amendments align with other pieces of legislation then

those matters will all be considered in the nearness of time.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister, that is the end of questions for that statement.

The final Statement also has questions and Minister for Cabinet. MP King would like to put questions to you. MP King.

QUESTION 1: INTERNATIONAL ARCHINES DAY

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

Regarding the Archives, I agree wholeheartedly with what Minister Rabain has said about the incredible work that the Archives does to preserve our history and culture.

Towards that end I know that Minister Rabain would have had many conversations with Ms. [Karla] Ingemann who is in control of things over there. And I know during the discussion that I had there was concern about not having enough space to make the artefacts available to the public you know to kids, et cetera, so that we can engage with it because the building is not fit for purpose.

The question I have is, What is the plan to find a suitable building that will meet the needs of the National Archives? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker I did visit there on Monday. That wasn't anything that came up, so I will endeavour to investigate what that Member is talking about and provide updates when I can.

The Speaker: Ok. Supplementary or . . . the Minister basically said he will have to find an answer to your response.

Mr. Robert King: That is satisfactory. Thank you.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Members, that brings us to an end of the Question Period for today. There are no more questions at this stage, and we will now move on the next item on the Order Paper this morning which would be the congratulatory and obituary speeches.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I would like to ask this House to send condolences, sincere condolences, to my relatives who experienced an unexpected loss this past week.

My cousin—and I will associate MP Fogo with this because there is one of her constituents at the tender age of 26—Mr. Speaker, suddenly passed away at home with his wife, Mr. Sakima (Twana) Sakimo Richards. I wish for this House to send sincere condolences to his wife, Twana, as well as his parents, Yuri and Llewka' Richards.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like condolences sent to the family of Quillard “Booly” Smith, another constituent of mine. [She] was one of those constituents (and we all have them) who says, *Hey don't bother visiting me. You're cool. I've known you all my life* and she could actually say that she had. She was very good friends with my family, my mom and my aunts, and they kind of grew up together and I was shocked to read of her passing. May her soul rest in peace, Mr. Speaker. The irony is that her services will be on her birthday, on the 23rd of June. And it was interesting because I send out birthday notices every month and so I was doing my June compilation just at the end of May and of course she was there, and she was written down as someone to contact. And now I won't have the opportunity to do that.

Mr. Speaker, lastly again—it has been a tragic week for sure—condolences sent to the family of Worshipful Brother Kendall Harvey. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how many in the House would know but this is the husband of Mrs. Tina Evans Harvey at DCI. As the former Minister of Education, she was the DCI officer. So having her by my side for almost seven-plus years, I got to know her and her husband quite well. I knew him in other circles as well, but this was a different type of getting to know him and his wife. And I am sure that this death yesterday morning is quite a shock to most of us. And so, I just ask this House to please keep Tina's family in their thoughts and prayers and offer our sincere condolences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Speaker

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to be associated with the remarks made for Quillard Smith, a St. Georgian and I guess a figure in St. George’s given her bubbly and lively personality. And one of the reasons why I stand to offer condolences to the family is because Quillard spent much of her time taking care of other people's loved ones. I believe her last place of employment was Sylvia Richardson's [Care Facility]. She took that job to heart and she gave more than 100 per cent and she will be sorely missed. I can't imagine going through St. George's without her bubbly personality

Mr. Speaker, even though these remarks were made at our last sitting I believe, I would like to be associated with the remarks for Dr. Bassett. And the reason why I wanted to do that . . . I did not teach with him. I certainly taught during his time, and he was far more

senior than me at the time that I was teaching, but I do not remember it being stated—and if it was, being stated boldly—that he worked with us. He was a key feature on the Parliamentary Prayer breakfast team and I wanted that to be highlighted in the House . . . that he worked very closely with the parliamentary group to ensure that especially when it came to matters of the church, that he was there to assist and ensure that we fellowshipped in a way to enhance good relations for both sides of the House. And so, I thought that it was necessary that that particular part of his career be highlighted in this House. So, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to ask this house to give congratulations to a very special young lady—and I declare my interest, Mr. Speaker. The young lady to whom I am referring is one by the name of Sienna Mary Harper. That is my granddaughter. She was voted athlete of the year recently, Mr. Speaker, so I would like to highlight that on her behalf.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker—what was that?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, she takes after her father, yes.

Mr. Speaker whilst I am on my feet, and I will declare my interest yet one more time this morning, I would like the House to send congratulations to a young lady by the name of Joanne De Silva, who happens to be my wife of 43 years today. So, I take my hat off to her for putting up with me for 43 years—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And I guess I will let her know that the Opposition are giving certainly a whole heap of praise to her. I am sure she's listening and I . . . but I would like to say that I am proud to have been her husband for these 43 years as she has had to put up with many, many, many years of me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other Member . . . MP Pearman

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

I would like to pass along congratulations to the Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda (CURB) for the event that they put on a little bit ago—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: —and I'll get there to associate, well I will associate the whole House, but let me also just note that they put on the memorial event for Dr. Eva Hodgson at the Cathedral. It was an excellent event. I was privileged to be there together with Senator Victoria Cunningham from another place and also, we had the pleasure of listening to a speech from the Honourable Minister Owen Darrell. But it was an excellent event that was both sombre and positive, reflective, but also very powerful. So, it was a pleasure to attend.

And on a much lighter note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . . you have already done so, but formally on behalf of the Opposition and with the permission of the Acting Opposition Leader, I would like to recognise the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms today. I do know him, and I seem to think he might have a connection already with the House, but I could be mistaken about that. And I was looking around for a certain MP today to congratulate her as well, but I don't know if this is a temporary or permanent measure, but on behalf of the Opposition we are delighted to see you here. So, thank you very much.

The Speaker: He is temporary while the Sergeant is off Island.

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

The Speaker: MP . . . Minister Darrell.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to offer congratulations for many of the cultural and sports events that are happening around the Island. But I would like to start with someone that many individuals around my age would know well. I want to congratulate Mr. Kurvin Spence, you would have seen it in the daily recently, for winning first place in Englands Business Awards regional for TopKuttz. That's a barber shop that he has over . . . across the pond. And many would know Mr. Spence as he used to cut for many years at Spence Hair Designs. And as the Minister responsible for Culture, I would also like to point out that he was a top selector for the Playbwoy Sound back in the day—for those of you that used to hang out, right—Scalacci.

[Laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to send congratulations to a Bermudian singer and social media influencer, Ms. Kaelyn Kastle. Ms. Kastle has most recently held down a successful career in Atlanta and she has decided to return home, and she comes home often. But on this particular occasion, she has been shooting a video for her latest hit. And she specifically has said that she has done this to showcase her Island. Also of note, Mr. Speaker, and I know this would be of

interest to you: she was a former Youth Parliamentarian. And at the time, I was one of the advisers here and it's so delightful to see what she is doing in her career (which is her passion) as well as showing and highlighting her Island

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the organisers of the Smash Invitational for their second year of putting on this cricket tournament and the winners for the second year, Hamilton Parish Hurricanes.

I would also like to congratulate the National Junior [Athlete] Sponsorship [Programme] awardees. This ceremony was held last night, hosted by the Department of Sport and Recreation. I would like to associate the National Swim Coach, the Honourable Ben Smith, who was there last evening as well.

I would like to recognise and congratulate the Bermuda Football Association Senior National Football Team for their 2-1 victory over Cuba taking us into the final qualifying round of the 2026 World Cup, where we will take on the likes of Jamaica, Trinidad and Curaçao. So, we are looking forward to supporting them as they prepare for this final stage of qualifying.

And to the students of the Menuhin Foundation's annual string concert congratulations to them. And finally, to the members of Vasco da Gama and the entire Portuguese community on the celebration of Portuguese Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you. MP Smith, you have your three minutes.

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

I wanted to extend congratulations to the Port Royal Primary School community. They recently celebrated their 90th anniversary. They had a celebration event, but they also set up and established an alumni association that includes some very impressive people: Dame Flora Duffy, Dr. Carika Weldon and Patrick Tannock, who is a well-known international insurance executive. They are going to plan . . . they are working on some initiatives for the months ahead so we can look forward to hearing what comes out of that. But I just wanted to say in the meantime congratulations, and we look forward to their future success. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Swan, you jumped up earlier and you're up again . . .

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sadness that I ask for condolences to be extended to the family of hotelier and a family member of mine Clyde Darrell on his passing. He served in the hotel industry, starting off as a bellman all the way up to resident manager. He represented Bermuda internationally promoting tourism and [he was a] well-loved person in the industry, who mentored many in the industry.

I would like for condolences to be sent to the family of Thomas Dujion Heyliger-Crane. I am sure MP Fogo and MP Ming from St. George's would like to be associated with that going out to Dexter Heyliger and Georgeatte Crane down there in St. George's. [I was] very saddened by that passing.

To the family of Gerald Correia, from St. George's as well, Captain Gerald will be sadly missed, having recently passed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulations given to the Bermuda National Football Team on making it to the final stages of the World Cup. I want to congratulate the coaching staff and the young team which he's put together of young semi-professionals and aspiring full-time professionals, who are finding a synergy. And may they continue to do well. He termed that last game as Bermuda's World Cup and they rose to the occasion and now they have got another opportunity to be a giant killer, with Jamaica and Trinidad and Curaçao standing in the way of being in this upcoming World Cup.

I would like for congratulations to be extended to young Oliver Betschart, young golfer who just made it past the local qualifying stage of the U.S. Amateur. Honourable Members Tyrrell, De Silva and Lister would like to be associated with that. I am familiar with the progress this young man's making and I feel he'll go on from strength to strength.

The Speaker: The Member over here wants to be associated too.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: The RAA [Seniors] Fashion Show which featured Deputy Speaker Foggo and MP Ming and former member Arthur Pitcher and Calvin Shabazz, Esme Williams, Maxine Esdaille, Cindy Swan and Neil Paynter and several others called upon a great stand-in singer in myself to come in and fill in the gap.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Self-appointed.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well . . . self-appointed, I come from a singing family.

The Speaker: Thank you, thank you. Your three minutes is up, Member. Thank you.

[Timer chimes]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Thank you.

The Speaker: MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you Mr. Speaker.

First of all, let me also associate with the congratulations for the young Oliver Betschart. I would also like to associate with the congratulations to Vasco da Gama Club and their celebration of Portuguese Day.

I would like to congratulate a few young Bermudians today Yusef Bushara who recently released his first debut (debut being the first) poetry collection. I have had the opportunity to meet him. He is a thoughtful and accomplished young Bermudian. I would urge everybody to go out and get his poetry collection which will be available locally shortly. I certainly look forward to seeing what comes up in the future for this young man.

I would also like to congratulate Aaliyah Nolan who has been playing football overseas. She was recently recognised by Bradford City Football Club after she hung up her boots for her accomplishments and contributions to that Club's successes. So certainly, we will be looking to see what she does next as she moves on from football.

I would also like to congratulate Christian Ebbin. He is a freshman at Tulane University and on their sailing team and he has just won an honourable mention, so not quite making it onto the United States Collegiate Sailing All-American team. Now for those who follow those things they will know this is a very large country, very big set of competitive sailors and for him to even receive that recognition as an honourable mention as a freshman is a major accomplishment. We certainly look forward to seeing what he accomplishes in his sailing career at Tulane.

Now it's no surprise, Mr. Speaker, because he is the nephew of Bermuda Olympian sailor, Malcolm Smith, who competed for Bermuda in the 1996 Olympic Games.

And while we are on this theme, I also would like to congratulate in advance the participants of the Edward Cross Long Distance Comet race. I have checked the forecast, and I think they should have some relatively interesting sailing, so I hope that they are safe and have a very enjoyable race.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the listening audience and to my fellow colleagues.

I would first like to start, Mr. Speaker, by sending condolences to the family, and I know it was mentioned in the last sitting of the House, Dr. Melvyn Bassett. My late mother, when she started out teaching at Sandys, she was teaching alongside of him, so I've known him all my life and always known him to be a very upstanding man and a man of valour. So, I would just like to send condolences. I would like to also associate Minister Wilson with the condolences to the family of Dr. Melvyn Bassett.

Also, I would like to associate MP Ming because MP Foggo did forget to associate her to the condolences to the family of Quillard Smith. So, I would like to associate MP Ming.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by sending congratulations to young Mr. Marcus Iris-Simmons who recently was promoted to the outlet captain at Hamilton Princess. It is good to see young Bermudians in their fields, working their way up, being promoted and working their way to positions of leadership in their place of employment.

Also, I would like to send congratulations . . . or I will associate with the congratulations to the men's football team, the National Team for making it to this final round of qualifying. I know every Bermudian will hope and wish that they do well and do qualify for the full World Cup tournament where we will all be looking forward to travel . . . to see the team play and represent Bermuda.

While we're on sports, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to just send to our competitors, the participants who are competing and representing Bermuda around the world, to the tennis team that's at the Davis Cup . . . to our bowling team that's at the CAC games, to the Bermuda women's golf team participating in the invitational, I believe in Florida, Kitty Michaels Invitational and also to the rugby team. So, to all these teams that are participating internationally, we wish them well representing Bermuda.

And lastly, I would also like to send congratulations to the most recent graduates of my alma mater the Bermuda Institute. They held their graduation, senior graduation last weekend and I would just like to recognise three of those graduating class Miss Marley Brown, Mr. Xavien James and Mr. Isaiah O'Brien. Miss Marley Brown is the deputy chairman of the Junior Road Safety Council. She's also a member of Youth Parliament and very active and because of those and her academic achievements she was also a recipient of the Miranda D. Lister scholarship presented by my family on behalf of my recent . . . mother.

And, Mr. Speaker, lastly, we were not in the last week so I would like to send you happy belated birthday wishes for your birthday last Friday—

[Desk thumping and Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And also, to all the fathers Happy Father's Day for this weekend coming up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: On the wire, was he?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy, are you going to move us to lunch?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I move that we now adjourn for lunch and return at 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none. We will now stand adjourned for lunch until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:32 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now back in session.

We concluded the Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches this morning. The next item on the Order Paper is Matters of Privilege.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: That brings us to the Orders of the Day and the first item is the second reading of the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I hope you had a good lunch.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none. Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the House Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 (which I will hereinafter refer to as "the Bill").

This Bill amends the Insurance Act 1978 (which I will refer to as "the Act") to confirm and expand the regulatory powers of the Bermuda Monetary Authority (which I will refer to as "the Authority") in respect of statutory financial statements by allowing the Authority to make rules concerning prudential and technical standards and the form and content of the information of such statements. The Bill also validates rules previously made by the Authority in relation to statutory financial statements.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's insurance industry operates under a globally respected regulatory framework, which is critical to our international standing. The Authority is a financial services regulator and plays an important role in maintaining the soundness and reputation of our jurisdiction. This Bill is a necessary and prudent measure to ensure the legal integrity of that framework.

Mr. Speaker, the key highlights of the Bill are as follows. Changes will provide the Authority with the ability to make rules prescribing prudential or technical standards in relation to key regulatory areas. However, statutory financial statements were not originally included in the list of matters to which such rules would apply. As a result, some rules made by the Authority, including the Insurance Account Rules 2016, and the rules for Collateralized Insurers, Special Purpose Insurers, and Class IIGB Insurers, are considered *ultra vires* to the extent that they prescribe technical standards for statutory financial instruments. To remedy this and to remove any uncertainty, the Bill amends this particular section expressly allowing the Authority to make rules in relation to statutory financial statements. This will regularise the legal basis of existing rules and confirm the Authority's powers moving forward. These amendments are being proposed to bring the Insurance Act [1978] in line with the Investment Business Act [2003] and the Digital Asset Business Act [2018].

Further, Mr. Speaker, the Bill introduces two new and additional subsections that provide the form and information contained in statutory financial

statements that may be prescribed by regulations made by the Minister of Finance for certain classes of insurers, for example, Class 1, [Class] 2, [Class] 3, [Class] A, [Class] B, [Class] IGB, and [Class] ILT, or by rules made by the Authority for other insurance classes, Class 3A, [Class] 3B, [Class] 4, [Class] C, Class D, Class E, [Class] IILT, and [Class] IIGB insurers, and Special Purpose Insurers and Collateralised Insurers. This will provide that rules made under the new subsection are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny under the Statutory Instruments Act [1977], aligning with the treatment of other technical standards made by the Authority.

Mr. Speaker, this dual approach respects the historical vires established in section 53 of the Act while recognising the evolving role of the Authority in supervising Bermuda's increasingly sophisticated insurance sector.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority sought to introduce new technical standards for statutory financial statements in 2022. Legal advice from the Attorney General's Chambers confirmed the Authority lacked vires to make such rules under the current drafting of section 6A and advised that an amendment to section 6A(1) would provide the vires required. Without this amendment, Bermuda could risk undermining the legitimacy of its regulatory regime and jeopardise international recognition such as Solvency II equivalence. The Bill validates any rules made by the Authority under this particular section in to the coming into force of this Bill, which relates to statutory financial statements. This provision is necessary to preserve legal certainty and regulatory continuity, especially as these rules underpin Bermuda's status as a Solvency II equivalent jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, therefore, this Bill is essential to uphold Bermuda's continued sterling reputation as a premier international financial centre.

When it comes to consultation, both the Authority and Attorney General's Chambers have approved the proposals and, of course, have no objections.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, regarding commencement, the Bill will come into operation immediately upon enactment.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the technical teams within the Authority, the Attorney General's Chambers, and the Ministry of Finance who have worked diligently to ensure the clarity, robustness and legality of our insurance regulatory framework is maintained and that we continue to ensure the continued growth of this vital sector of our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Is there any other Member?

MP DeCouto?

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

We support this Bill. We understand that for the BMA to carry out its functions it needs to acquire certain amounts of information, certain types of data, and it needs to have a certain view of the businesses that it is regulating. And, of course, it being 2025, Mr. Speaker, it would like to receive that information in a relatively complete, consistent and fixed format so it could be processed amenably. We are not in the days of people copying things out longhand from a variety of randomly stapled together submissions.

As someone who myself, historically, has filled out these sorts of things for the BMA, I can assure you that it is important that they are consistent. And so, we support this and acknowledge the need for it.

I also note the validation clause. So, of course, it is important that this makes things that have been done historically also be deemed acceptable and legal.

And we just have one quick question, which is, I noted about how some classes are regulated by the Authority and some classes are regulated by the Ministry. Perhaps the Premier could give a brief explanation as to why that is, and if there are any concerns we should have about the communications or the gaps between those with respect to the sorts of information that are required.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the classes . . . it is clear from reading the Bill and going back to the original Act, are actually regulated by the Authority and some seem to be regulated by the Ministry.

The Speaker: Is that something you are addressing under one of the clauses? Because you can do that in Committee.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: It is more of a general question because you can see that there are different clauses for the different situations. And if the Premier was able to make a general comment as to why these classes are handled separately and if we should have any concerns about inconsistency in the sorts of data and returns and statements being requested across those two areas of regulation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There ae none.

Premier.

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

I will seek to get clarity on the matter that the Shadow Minister has raised. What I would say is that it may be a matter related to . . . I am not going to

speculate. I will seek to get the matter . . . But it is my understanding that all insurers are regulated by the Bermuda Monetary Authority.

But I understand the basis of the question, and I will seek to provide an answer to the Shadow Minister in due course.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I am grateful for the Opposition's support. As I said, this is a reasonably routine item. And I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 2:10 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members.

We are now in Committee of the whole [House] to consider the Bill entitled Insurance Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

Madam Chairman, I would like to move all of the clauses if I may.

The Chairman: It has been moved that all of the clauses be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Of course you may.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 6A *[sic]* of the Act. And . . . sorry. Let me start again.

Madam Chairman, clause 2 amends section 6A(1) of the Insurance Act 1978 to insert a new paragraph (fa) "statutory financial [statements]" which will allow the Authority to make rules prescribing prudential or technical standards in relation to statutory financial statements.

Clause 3 amends section 15 of the Insurance Act 1978 to provide [that] the form and information contained in statutory financial statements pursuant to subsection (2) can be prescribed by regulations made by the Minister with respect to particular classes of insurers or rules made by the Authority with respect to other classes of insurers.

And I would be grateful if the Shadow Minister on that particular aspect can let me know if that was the particular difference of which he was referring to.

Clause 3 [continuing] also provides that Rules made by the Authority under new subsection (3A)(b) are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Clause 4 validates any rules previously made by the Authority under section 6A of the Insurance Act 1978 in respect of prudential and technical standards in relation to statutory financial statements and the form and content of information to be contained in statutory financial statements prior to this Bill coming to force.

And, as I had mentioned and stated, certainly, Madam Chairman, those particular matters are similar to matters that we see in other financial services legislation bringing into line with the other Acts, such as the Investment Business Act [2003], Digital Asset Business Act [2018].

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister and Premier.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25, the Shadow Minister of Finance.

Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairman.

Yes, Mr. Premier was correct. My question was in relation to the clause 3 [new section 15 (3A)] and noting that subclauses [(3A)](a) and (b) split the regulation of various classes between the Minister and the Authority.

And my general question related to that is, given that this is, in my view, to help ensure that the Authority is getting information in consistent fixed formats, companies as well would like to provide information in as few different formats and layouts as possible. Will there be steps to be taken that, where applicable, these formats as prescribed by the Minister versus as prescribed by the Authority will be made consistently?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman and good afternoon to you.

I have a question in relation to clause 3.

The Honourable Premier and Finance Minister indicated in relation to clause 3 [new section 15 (3A)(b)] that future rules made by the BMA pursuant to this amendment Act will not be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. And I was just going to ask the Honourable Finance Minister if that is the case in relation to other BMA rules.

I have a further question. I can put them both now if you wish.

Yes.

My further question is in relation to clause 4, and that is effectively giving retroactive approval. And my question is, Is the retroactive approval being given generic, or is there a specific case or cases (plural) envisaged that will now be retroactively approved by reason of this section?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

There being no other Members at this moment, I recognise the Finance Minister and Premier.

Premier, you have the floor.

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

Madam Chairman, in respect to matters related to clause 3, specifically asked by the Shadow Minister, there is a difference between regulations and rules. Of course, regulations are a secondary legislation that is brought here, whether by affirmative or negative resolution. And regulations, which are issued under the Bermuda Monetary Authority, as per our Acts, are issued with a consultation of the Authority and go through a back-and-forth particular process on there. So, there is a difference between those. So, I understand what you are stating, but there is a difference.

But in regard to the broader question in regard to similarity, they all emanate from the Bermuda Monetary Authority, but the question is whether or not things are in secondary legislation or whether or not they are rules which are issued by the Authority.

In respect to the question that is asked by the Honourable Shadow Attorney General, the Honourable Learned Shadow Attorney General, what I would say is that rules are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny. These rules are just done. That is the same as we find in other regulatory Acts. So, this is not new in any way, shape or form.

And on the other particular issue, I think I covered that inside the brief. The BMA has issued rules specifically to the statutory financial statements which are required from certain insurers, which is similar to other Acts, such as the Investment Business Act [2003], the Digital Asset Business Act [2018]. Rules were issued in this case and instance just to make sure that the financial statements submitted contained all the particular information that the Bermuda Monetary Authority needed. And it was found that that particular piece of specificity that was required for the rules was not inside the primary Act. And so, this is just inserting those and then, therefore, making sure that the rules in respect to those things are accepted.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

I recognise the Member from Constituency 22. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Honourable Premier and Finance Minister for those answers.

In relation to the second answer, so clause 4 has a deeming provision that things have already been validly made. And I understand your answer that you just gave, Honourable Premier and Finance Minister. But my question is, are we just having the deeming provision generically so it is there; or are there actually things that are being deemed valid because of this clause?

Thanks.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

There being none, Premier.

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

To answer the Honourable Shadow Minister's question, rules have been promulgated. And so, the issue is these rules that have been promulgated, those are the ones that we are deeming to be valid. So those rules have been done in the exact same way that they have been done for the Digital Asset Business Act [2018], and the Investment Business Act [2003], and other financial sectors. And so that is what it is.

Those rules have been put out saying these are the standards for financial statements to make sure all the information is in there, and it is just to make sure that they have the legal certainty which is stated here.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for that answer.

The Chairman: Okay.

No other Members?

Okay. I recognise the Premier.

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

Madam 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?

There are none. Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

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

I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Any objections? There are none.

Approved.

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

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

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

Are there any objections?

There are none. So approved.

[Motion carried: The Insurance Amendment Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 2:20 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

Thank you. That brings that matter to a close for the time being.

We will move on to the next item. The next item on the Order Paper is the Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

TRADE MARKS AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 to this Honourable House.

This Bill seeks to amend the Trade Marks Act 2023 to clarify several provisions in that legislation. This Bill also includes a Schedule of fee regulations that are intended to replace Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations 2023.

Mr. Speaker, as Honourable Members are aware, the Government is currently in the process of updating this legislation governing intellectual property. The Trade Marks Act 2023 was the first piece of legislation that was approved by Parliament as part of this effort, along with the Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations 2023. Several months later, in December 2023, the Trade Marks Regulations 2023 were laid in this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, a trade mark is essentially a recognisable sign used to distinguish the goods or service of one party from those of another. Trade marks can be used by individuals and businesses, and they also can be used to indicate membership in a particular association. Trade marks can take the form of words, including names, slogans and letters, symbols, colours, sounds, smells, packaging or design. They are used to represent the goodwill that the mark owners have earned by marketing their products and services.

For instance, whenever you see the word Nike, or the image of the commonly referred to as a swoosh, on shoes or clothing, we recognise the shoe or clothing as a “Nike” product. Nike is also known for its use of the slogan, “Just Do It.” Mr. Speaker, trade marks are intended to cause such automatic assumptions and can become a very valuable part of a business by helping to establish brand recognition. They are assets that confer certain legal rights on the owner. Registration of trade marks in Bermuda gives the owner of the mark the right to use it and to prevent others from using it without permission.

Mr. Speaker, trade marks play a crucial role in a commercial marketplace and business owners rely on them to compete. For this reason, it is important to provide a legal framework that is comprehensive, modern and consistent with global practices.

The Trade Marks Act 2023 accomplishes this. However, the Bill being debated today includes amendments that were deemed necessary to add further clarity and to ensure compliance with certain international standards.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will insert a definition of the term “transmission” as the term is used in the Trade Marks Act 2023 to refer to a transfer of a registered Trade Mark. The intention is to clarify that such a transfer can occur in connection with a corporate merger or otherwise. Based on previous communications with customers and filing regarding transfers of registered Trade Marks, the Registry General's Department determined it would be helpful to include the proposed

definition which specifically mentions corporate mergers along with other modes of transfer.

Mr. Speaker, proposed changes to section 34 of the Act will provide general authority for the Registrar to record in the Trade Marks register any transfer of ownership or other rights in a registered trade mark which is not already mentioned in that section. This would include transfers resulting from corporate mergers.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill will also make very minor changes to Schedule 3 of the [principal] Act 2023 to help ensure compliance with international guidelines as related to international trade marks and in consequence of the changes proposed to section 34.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations 2025 are being introduced in a Schedule to the Bill and will replace the Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations 2023. As I stated at the time this Bill was tabled, commencement of the new legislation has been delayed, in large part to allow additional time for the Registry General to prepare to administer the new framework. This includes the fees set out in the 2023 fee regulations.

Mr. Speaker, since these regulations have not yet been brought into force, the required amendments have been incorporated into the Schedule of Fees and the entire set of regulations reintroduced as a matter of efficiency. While the vast majority of fees are the same as those included in the 2023 Schedule of Fees, eight fees have been added to the 2025 version. Fees numbers 7, 23, 67, and 99 relate to new processes being undertaken by the Registry General's Department under the new law and fees numbers 36, 37, 42, and 43 related to continuing processes [that] have been added to ensure the Government collects appropriate fees for the processes to which they are related.

The 2025 fee schedule also includes some minor corrections to some of the fee descriptions to ensure correct application of the fees.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a substantial undertaking, and we are all looking forward to commencement of the legislation. The Registry General's Department and Attorney General's Chambers have already completed the drafting process for all other regulations and documents required to support the legislation, including the forms needed to make applications and required filings. These will be gazetted and published on the government's website in the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I previously stated that the Trade Marks legislation will commence on July 1. However, we will be changing the date to August 1, 2025, to allow the legislative calendar for the Senate to consider this Bill. Unfortunately, this delay is unavoidable due to the legislative schedule.

Mr. Speaker, again, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to industry representatives for their cooperation and valuable input on the Trade Marks legislation. I also would like to thank the technical officers in the Registry General's Department and the Attorney General's Chambers for their work on this initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Campbell.

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

Mr. Speaker, I know from firsthand experience, having sat with the technical staff who the Minister just thanked, and I would like to thank them as well for the efforts that they have put in. This is a very complex area and very difficult to keep track of all the different requirements under the protocols, et cetera.

The Minister mentioned the 2023 Trade Marks Act, which repealed and replaced the Trade Marks Act 1974. So that shows you that the existing legislation was very old, and it was decided that rather than amend the 1974 Act that it would be better to repeal it. I am saying that because it sets the sort of background for today's Bill. And when we debated the 2023 Act, we knew additional amendments were coming. So, it is no surprise that we have this Bill here today. And before I forget, the One Bermuda Alliance does support this.

Mr. Speaker, there is a saying that too many cooks spoil the broth. I do not believe that is the case when it comes to Acts such as this and this particular technical area. I think the more eyes we have looking at this, the more quickly the battle will be able to close the gap.

So, with that, I do believe that at least one of my colleagues has some comments on this Bill. But we do in general support it, and we thank the technical staff for their efforts in this very important and technical area.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would any other Member?

MP Pearman, would you like to make a contribution?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

So, let me pick up where my colleague left off and just say my thanks as well to the technical staff who are present in the Chamber today, including the Registrar General Mr. Pennyman who I see over there. Let me also just declare my interest. I am at Conyers, which is of course one of the industry representatives that were just thanked by the Minister for our endeavours—our nonchargeable endeavours—to participate in the consultation process.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: That is right. A lawyer not charging, doing social conscience work for the betterment of Bermuda.

But I do thank the technical staff.

This is a substantial change in this area of law, not just this, obviously, but the earlier Bill, the 2023 Bill, and the regulations in 2025, I believe they were. So, I do recognise that this is a great step forward if I can call [it] that. It is fantastic that we are progressing new legislation in the intellectual properties sphere, and it is a good thing for this jurisdiction to get our IP laws up to date and to remain competitive on the global stage.

So yes, my colleague MP Campbell, the Shadow Minister, was quite right to say we support this Bill.

We obviously have had a few hiccups on the way. Some of the anticipated live dates have been deferred. I think it was going to be 1 January, then 1 April. It was 1 July, and I think it is now 1 August. But look, let's be real. This is not simple stuff. This is complex. This is involving the Madrid Protocol, the Paris Convention, et cetera and trying to wrap our heads around it. So, I really do not think . . . Certainly the Opposition is not going to take a cheap shot on the Government's delays. It happens.

And indeed, the statement just made by the Honourable Minister that the go live date of July will be pushed back to August does sound sensible because as I will go on there are a couple of bits and bobs that may not yet have been tied down, and they will require tying down before we go live. Better not to go live until they are ready, and therefore, let's get them ready. And so, it is in that cooperative and collaborative and supportive spirit that I have a few questions.

Essentially . . . well, my question for the Minister was going to be: Are you confident about the 1 July go-live date? And clearly not. But, are you confident about the 1 August now?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Anyway, that was not meant in any rude way. But we are now in 1st of August.

But let me pose just a couple more questions, if I may, for the Minister or for the technical staff.

So, in the Minister's prior speeches, he raised that there would be an allocation of necessary funds to ensure the new or upgraded software is in place to handle the newly expanded functions. And he spoke to the functions, as we have got these new functions that are going to be required, and I do not need to go into that technical detail. We are implementing fees for those functions. That is understandable. We do not do these things for free. But my question is in terms of specifics: How far down the road are we on the implementation of the new or upgraded software? So that is one: How far down the road are we?

Two: Can we implement the new legislation and the new functions without the new or upgraded software, or is that a necessary first step to get there?

And then two more questions, if I may, not about the software. The third question is this: The principal Act provides for registration of many things as a trade mark along the same lines as the UK. So, for example, the technical officers in the Chambers will understand this, but for the benefit of the listening public and indeed for my benefit and everyone's benefit, you know, we are now going to be trademarking things like sounds and 3D images, packaging, smells, for example. So, for example, the packaging, that is section 3 of the Act.

So, my question is really just a pragmatic one: What happens when we receive applications for these sorts of marks in Bermuda? Will the registry have the capabilities before the go-live date to accept registration of, for example, the sound of a Harley Davidson motorcycle, which I understand is protected in the UK.

Or, although smells are not specifically listed but are capable of registration in the UK, would we be in a position if there was a particular fragrance that needed to be registered in Bermuda?

So just in terms of the nuts and bolts and practicalities, my third question of four is: Are we going to be ready for that? And if not, is it best to be ready for that before the go-live date?

The fourth and final question that I would have is really around the Madrid Protocol [and] the Paris Convention. So, we are building into this amendment Act and into our legislative landscape the idea that Bermuda will be working alongside the concepts of the Convention and of the Protocol. And again, without being overly boring, my question is more again a pragmatic one. That suggests that we will at some point become a signatory. I do not think we are yet as far as I am aware, and I stand to be corrected if we are. But is the idea of the Government and the department that we would then become parties to the Convention and the Protocol? And if that is the idea, is the Government able to give any sense of how far away we are from joining these international conventions and then having our principal Act fully operative?

So, [it is a] two-part question, I guess. The first part is: Is that the intention, and if so, when? And then the second part is: If it is not the intention, how is our legislation going to work? Is it going to be sort of as I have seen in some Bills where there are green line sections that are in the Bill or are in the law, but they simply do not apply to Bermuda? So those are the questions.

I again extend my thanks to the civil servants and the Minister for his presentation. Again, this is complex stuff. Bermuda is doing the right thing to try to catch up or get ahead of the rest of the world. The UK is doing a wonderful job, and we are emulating them. But that emulation in relation to how they record sounds or smells, et cetera, may have some technical hurdles. And how to we propose to deal with those?

So again, just to recap, two questions about software, one question about sights, sounds, et cetera, and the technical process, and finally just the question on the Madrid Protocol and the Paris Convention. And that is a two-parter: Do we intend to get involved with

that and become signatories, and if so, when? And the second part is: If we do not intend to do that, how are we going to deal with the elements of the law that do not apply?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that brief moment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Good day, Mr. Speaker.

[I] just [want] to say it is very good to see the type of cooperative spirit that exists in this particular space. The amount of good that is done in Bermuda through the financial services, through the cooperations of the law firms, as was expressed just by the previous speaker, I think bodes well. I have often gotten up on many different occasions and say that there are more in this country that we need to collectively be proud of. I think this is one of those examples.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the trade marks, the modernisation and the global alignment that goes along with it, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognise . . . and I heard Nike mentioned, and how important that trade mark . . . it goes well beyond just a swoosh. It represents for that company an alignment of what they stand for. And their genius is not only in the trade mark that was established, that gets established here in this country, but it also speaks to the people that they align themselves with when it comes to establishing those particular trade marks.

In the case of Nike that was used as an example, you know, most of us know we wanted to be like Mike. And when Mike . . . And I am not referring to my colleague Mike Weeks in this case, but Michael thinking about—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: He may think so, yes. We are referring to Michael Jordan and the transfer of that brand from Michael Jordan to Tiger Woods. You saw that brand, that swoosh, take on a new dynamic.

And as you have other . . . And in this case, I am referring to athletes, you know. You would see that transfer go and have great significance in those communities. And a lot of money is made.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, when you look at these particular trade marks to recognise how much of a role that we play in that particular space. We do not see the billions—and I am sure those in financial services might go a step further and say even trillions—that get generated through the type of business that gets associated, and the knock-on effects of those particular businesses being involved in trade marks. But it is important business and important, indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Here in Bermuda, we often speak about how we punch above our weight in International compliance. It is very significant that we operate in these particular spaces garnering great respect from across the world where people could look to see just how Bermuda would actually do things in that particular space.

And without fanfare, that international compliance, our role in ensuring that we do this due diligence is very significant. You know, our framework certainly aligns with global standards and practices, Mr. Speaker. And I think it is important that we continue to recognise the role that we play in this particular space.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are you finished MP?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, that is my contribution at this particular time.

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. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Members for their intervention in today's debate. I would like to thank the Opposition for their support and their acknowledgement of the progress that is actually being made as it pertains to us progressing our intellectual property legislation and us being put on a footing where we have the proper framework in place to protect intellectual property.

As indicated, the amendment seeks to simply clarify sections of the robust 2023 legislation and introduce new fees.

The Honourable Learned Member Pearman had a number of questions as it pertains to the commencement date and whether or not we have the capabilities to go live and are ready to go. The commencement date was set for July 1, and we are prepared to go live. We were prepared to go live July 1. However, due to the legislative agenda of the Senate, the Senate does not convene until July 2. As a result, there was an inability to have the Bill passed and moved into an Act by the commencement date. And that is why we are going to ask for an amendment, to have the commencement date to amended. It was not because we did not have the technical capabilities, or were not prepared for [the] go-live date.

We have implemented software, and that software is ready for utilisation. We are implementing the software in phases, yet when the software is implemented, there is further work to be done. We have engaged in and completed (it is ongoing, but we have completed) the necessary training for the staff.

And so, [for] nonconventional trade marks such as the sound of a Harley Davidson (I believe that was

the example given) the staff have been trained to handle nonconventional trade marks as well. And I think that bodes to how we are actually progressing not just legislation but the competency of the public service.

If asked a question specifically whether or not training is done, training will remain ongoing. This is an ever-evolving landscape, and we will continue to ensure that we remain competent to be as modern as we possibly can.

The first step to the international cooperation and conventions is to ensure that we have the legislative framework. Once the legislative framework is completed, then we will move forward with the process of working through the requirements to join the Paris Convention and the Madrid Protocol. I believe those were the majority of the questions asked.

But from a Bermuda standpoint, I believe that it is important to ensure that we know that this enhances Bermuda's product offerings and seeks to attract more trade marks to be registered in Bermuda. This will also serve to support the Government's fiscal position with increased revenues.

The administration of trade marks in Bermuda will become more efficient from an administrative standpoint. We have strong technical support, whether that is from countries like Trinidad and Tobago or the UK, that we can lean upon in this ever-evolving landscape. And what we are ultimately doing is providing greater levels of protection against infringement by enhancing the rights of those that operate in the marketplace.

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Speaker?

House in Committee at 2:48 pm

[Mr. Speaker. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

TRADE MARKS AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee of the whole for consideration of the Bill entitled Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Minister.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 5.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 5 be considered. Are there any objections to that?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Trade Marks Act 2023, the principal Act, to insert a definition of the term "transmission" so as to clarify the primary use of the term under the principal Act; to include in the list of registerable transactions under section 34(2) any other transmission of a registered trade mark or any right in or under it; to update Schedule 3 in accordance with the Madrid Protocol; and to provide for the Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations [2023].

Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the principal Act to insert a definition of the term "transmission" so as to clarify the primary use of the term under the principal Act.

Clause 3 amends section 34 of the principal Act to include in the list of registerable transactions under section 2 the transmission of a registered trade mark or any right in or under it.

Clause 4 amends section 3 of the principal Act to update paragraph 18 of the Schedule in accordance with the Madrid Protocol. An amendment is also made to paragraph 21 of Schedule 3 to reflect the expanded list of registerable transactions under clause 3.

Madam Chairman, clause 5 provides for the Government Fees (Trade Marks) Regulations 2025 as set out in the schedule.

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

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

As the Minister just pointed out, the clause 4 deals with the amendment to Schedule 3, and it is there where we are dealing with the Madrid Protocol point.

The Minister in the general debate very kindly addressed the Madrid Protocol point, but did not answer one further answer was just on timelines. And so, I would be grateful to hear any timelines on when we would sign up for that.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

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

Minister?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I will be guided, but the timelines is not a substantial feature of the amendment to the Act. I think it is a relevant question to ask, but not as it pertains to the clause because we would not be having the timelines inserted into the Act, and so it is not a relevant feature of the Bill. I will endeavour to get the timelines to the Honourable Learned Member, but it is not a question that pertains

to any amendment or proposed amendment to the actual Bill.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Thank you, Honourable Minister. I would be delighted to receive that in due course when convenient to you.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

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

Minister?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 5.

The Chairman: Be approved?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Most definitely.

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

Any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I would like to move clause 6.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 6 be considered. Are there any objections? There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, clause 6 provides for commencement. I would like to move an amendment to that clause.

The Chairman: It has been moved that an amendment be proposed for the clause. Any objections? There are none.

Minister.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 6

Hon. Jason Hayward: The amendment is that the Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 be amended in clause 6 by deleting 1 July 2025 and substituting 1 August 2025.

The Chairman: Is has been moved that the date of 1 July [2025] be substituted [with] 1 August [2025].

All in favour [say] Aye.

Any objections?

There are none. The amendment has been passed.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 6 passed.]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I would like to move [that] clause 6 [be passed] as amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 6 as amended be passed.

Any objections to that?

There are none. So moved.

[Motion carried: Clause 6 passed as amended.]

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I would like to move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved. Any objections to that?

There are none.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

The Chairman: The Schedules.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Sorry.

The Chairman: Just say Schedule.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I would like to move that the Schedule be approved.

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

Any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Schedule passed.]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam 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. Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So approved.

[Motion carried: The Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed with one amendment.]

[Gavel]

House resumed at 2:56 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

TRADE MARKS AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 being reported to the House as amended?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as amended. Thank you.

Members, that brings us to a close of the orders for today. Would you like to do the third reading now, Premier, of your Bill?

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 be now read for a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections? There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Insurance Amendment Act 2025 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill is read a third time by its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Insurance Amendment Act 2025 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled The Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 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

TRADE MARKS AMENDMENT ACT 2025

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 title only and is now passed.

Thank you, Members, Ministers.

[Motion carried: The Trade Marks Amendment Act 2025 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Speaker: Premier?

ADJOURNMENT

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

If I do not have the opportunity, I would like to wish you and all Members a very happy Father's Day, and I move that this House do now (all Members that are fathers, that is) and I move that this House do now adjourn until Friday the 27th of June 2025.

The Speaker: Does any Member wish to speak to that? No Member?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Minister?

SUMMER PREPARATIONS

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

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to spend a few moments speaking about summer preparations. I do not know if anyone felt the heat at around 12:35 when we left the Chamber on our way to our respective offices for lunch. But clearly summer has arisen, and it is here. I know that we have activities and family engagements and outdoor activities and so forth. I know I personally plan on taking my first dip on Monday. I know.

The Speaker: It is late! It is late!

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I know. I know but I wait until the sun crosses.

The Speaker: It is late!

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: In any event, Mr. Speaker, I just want to spend a few moments talking about summer preparations.

First and foremost, tomorrow is World Blood Donor Day. And it is observed globally. In fact, this is its 20th year, and the theme [is], if I quote, "Celebrating 20 years of giving: thank you, blood donors!" And this is particularly fitting in Bermuda because I want to encourage all persons to consider giving the gift of life and to provide blood donations regularly and as often as possible.

We recognise that blood donations save lives. Persons that are in automobile accidents, perhaps persons that have had severe surgeries following pregnancies, et cetera—they require blood transfusion. And when we have a small, limited population, it is all the more vital for persons to participate in blood donation. One unit of blood could potentially save three persons. So, I am encouraging persons under the sound of my voice to actively engage in blood donations. You would have heard recently that the hospital is also seeking persons to participate because the shortages are low. So, I would encourage persons to do that.

Continuing on with respect to the summer preparedness, it is mosquito season. I was talking to the Premier the other day, and I noticed he kept looking at me itching. I got a huge mosquito [bite] on the back of my leg. So, I am sure I am not alone with respect to that. We need to talk about something, unfortunately, called dengue fever and dengue prevention.

I think it is important for us to recognise that though Bermuda has not had an outbreak in recent years, we are still susceptible to it. We have a mosquito in Bermuda that is called the *Aedes aegypti* which can carry dengue fever. So, if it happens to bite somebody who is a tourist to our Island that is carrying dengue, it could spread throughout Bermuda very quickly.

We can avoid high instances of mosquitos by doing a couple of simple things. All of our water supplies where we have perhaps flower beds or buckets of water that are outside—just empty them because that is where mosquitos breed. And notwithstanding that, Vector Control are out there, and they are spraying and fogging areas where there is high concentration of mosquitos. We, too, can do our own part to try to eliminate that.

Persons may remember that in 2024, last year, the World Health Organization instituted warnings worldwide. There were hundreds of thousands of persons that got sick and/or died as a result of dengue fever. So, we certainly do not want to see that on our shores. And there are things that we can do to prevent that because it is preventable. However, we need to ensure that we do what we can to eliminate it by doing simple things around our houses and not having excess water supply.

And thirdly, again speaking about heat preparations, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak to the fact as it relates to hydration. It is really important, particularly as temperatures rise, that we remain hydrated, especially with respect to children, our elderly, and persons that are more vulnerable. We can take precautions by ensuring that we are hydrated.

If you ever feel symptoms of dizziness, dry mouth, confusion, or fatigue they should not be ignored because those could be signs of [de]hydration (as I grab my water). Those could be signs of [de]hydration, and we need to ensure that we are actively engaged in drinking plenty of water so that we can avoid that—particularly our youth, our seniors, and our loved ones, and those persons that are vulnerable. In addition, actually alcohol and caffeine do increase dehydration.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, sun protection—it is important for us to slap it on, wear our hats as well as broad spectrum sunscreen, and stay in the shade if possible, during the hours of 11:00 am and 3:00 pm. So, particularly for those persons that are working outdoors, they can protect themselves through proper sunscreen hats, and clothing. Now you can see a lot of clothing that you can purchase that reduces sun rays.

Unfortunately, in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, our skin cancer rates are 12 per cent higher than that in the United States. And we know global warming is occurring, and we are recognising that the ultra violet rays from the sun are hotter than ever. And 90 cases per year we see of new skin cancers in Bermuda, and 20 of those are melanoma. So, we can try to avoid that by taking our own precautions.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, water safety and pedestrian road safety. I would like to just speak about that for a few moments. Mr. Speaker, these are two important issues that I would like to highlight particularly as it relates to public safety issues, first and foremost water safety. Persons are going to the beaches. Persons are riding their boats and so forth, and we want to encourage persons to do so safely. Avoid riding or driving . . . (did you say *riding* or *driving*?) driving your boats with alcohol—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —with alcohol intake (right?), utilising life jackets, making sure you have all the safety equipment on your boat. And also, in particular as it relates to children, supervise your children when you are at the beaches or in areas of water because we certainly do not want to see any accidents in that regard.

And again, Mr. Speaker, on that note I want to speak about pedestrian road safety. This is a time when schools are about to end, and we are seeing more persons outside exercising and moving more Bermuda, which is what we are encouraging. So, we want to see that level of activity, but it is really, really important for

pedestrians on the road to exercise care, caution, and safety—and by that, I mean proper reflective gear.

I leave home just after 5:00 in the morning on my way to the gym, and the amount of people that are walking, which I commend because we want to see people moving more Bermuda . . . But they are not wearing reflective gear. And they are walking in very dark areas, [in] fully black clothing, and so forth without reflective gear.

I just want to encourage persons. Continue your exercise regimes because I think that is incredibly important, and we commend you for that. But also protect yourself and make sure that you are well lit. You see some people walking around, and they could be landing a plane because they have all the lights and the flashlights and so forth, but there are some people that are not wearing protective gear. And we are just encouraging people. Continue your exercise regime because that is commendable, but please protect yourself so that you can avoid an accident.

And finally, as we have spoken a little bit about this morning, Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable Chamber as it relates to youth mental health, we know that exam time is coming, and children are probably feeling anxiety and stress as it relates to their exams. We just want to ensure that our children recognise that their feelings are normal and that we are here to help them and that if they raise their hand and seek help, we will make sure that they receive it because they are not alone.

So, in that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to encourage everyone, particularly as we enter into this holiday season and the summer season, to exercise care and caution and to ensure that there are a lot of things that we can do. Public health does not speak specifically just about hospitals and clinics and the like, but there are other things that specifically relate to public health such as mosquito and vector control, ensuring that we are sun smart, making sure that we look after our vulnerable teenagers, [and] staying hydrated. And I am encouraging everyone to do all of those things because a little bit goes a long way, and therefore we can help to have healthy people and healthy communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

MP Famous?

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, good afternoon.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I had to leave early so I did not get a . . . Sorry. I was interrupted by the Deputy Speaker. Would you like to point of order me or something?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: *[Laughter]*.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I had to leave early, so I did not get a chance to speak on the obits and congrats. I would like to associate with the condolences for Kendall Harvey. He was a husband of my cousin Tina.

I do not know if this name was mentioned, Mr. Speaker. You may know the name. It is Eunice Jones.

The Speaker: I know Eunice, but no, it was not done. It was not done.

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I would like to give condolences to multiple families and multiple communities. Ms. Eunice Jones, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I think came from your neck of the woods.

The Speaker: Long time ago.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. So, [in the] Somerset community, West End community. And she lived in Devonshire—the posh side of Devonshire, but she lived in Devonshire. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Jones gave back to her community via St. Paul AME Church and by our school the Berkeley Institute. She was—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes. The original. There is only one.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I had the privilege of working with Ms. Jones on the Berkeley Educational Society. As she was transitioning out, I was transitioning in.

Those that have been to home going services at St. Paul's would know that [for] every St. Paul member there is a proclamation read about what this member has done for St. Paul—not just St. Paul but for the community at large. And Ms. Eunice Jones was the person who always read that proclamation. That might not be the right word, but you know what I mean, Mr. Speaker.

So, I can assure you that St. Paul AME church will be full of persons from Berkeley Institute and St. Paul and so many other [places where] this lady has touched the lives of Bermudians. So, I just want to give condolences to her [family], [the] St. Paul family, [and the] Berkeley family.

And there was another lady passed from Berkeley, but her name has not been released yet. So, I will leave that to another time.

CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to move on from that, and I would just like to [go to] another subject that is very important that we all should pay attention to, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to start off with the word *credibility* and the definition thereof. Credibility refers to the fact that someone can be believed or trusted. It is the capacity for belief. Credibility is important in many contexts such as journalism, research, and politics where it is essential to establish trust with the audience or readership. Credibility can be established through various means such as providing evidence, citing sources, and demonstrating expertise.

Mr. Speaker, approximately a year and a half ago I read an article in *The Royal Gazette,* and it sickened me. It really sickened me. And I am going to use some quotes out of that, Mr. Speaker.

Using the word *genocide* is deliberately inflammatory. The person goes on and says, "The State of Israel is not practicing apartheid," Mr. Speaker. That was 18 months ago roughly.

So fast forward, Mr. Speaker. [A] headline from today [is] "Gaza Death Toll Surpassed 55,000 as Israel Attacks Killed Dozens of Aid Sites." What does that mean? That they have [been] dropping bombs on women and children in aid sites. They are shooting people who are starving just trying to get food. This is not just hearsay. This is on BBC. This is on CNN. These are credible news stories—credibility, Mr. Speaker.

So, let's go back to the person who wrote that that says, *Israel is not practicing apartheid.* They go back and say genocide is deliberately inflammatory. So, if 55,000 people that we know of have been slaughtered, how many does it take before it becomes a genocide? Does it take 100,000, half a million? They only have 2.1 [million]. So, do you wipe out everyone, and then you say it is a genocide?

Mr. Speaker, not only are people dying being killed because of bombs and guns—

The Speaker: Starvation.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —it is starvation, lack of . . . They have blown up almost every hospital, so women who are pregnant cannot get neonatal care. People who have lost limbs cannot get proper treatment, so they are dying from gangrene. I could go on and on, but the question remains: How many people need to starve to death before it is acknowledged that this is genocide, Mr. Speaker? How many people have to be denied aid before it is acknowledged that it is apartheid?

Mr. Speaker, we cannot stand in this House and talk about, you know, all sorts of things, costs of living, this, that, and the other, which is what we were elected to do. But Mr. Speaker, when it comes to basic humanity . . . And we are going to have Members in this House deny that people are being slaughtered, deny that there is genocide going on. It talked back to the word *credibility.*

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the United Nations, placed 800 miles to the west of us, votes overwhelmingly for immediate Gaza ceasefire. Now there are some nations that abstain, some that voted against, but the majority of the United Nations members voted for this immediate ceasefire because you cannot hide it anymore. There is nothing left. There are no buildings left to hide the bodies in; they are right there in the street.

So, it goes back to the word *credibility*, Mr. Speaker. Credibility refers to the fact that someone can be believed or trusted. So, I ask this House. I ask those who are listening: When someone denies that what is going on in Gaza is genocide, can you trust them? Do they actually have credibility on any subject going forward?

Mr. Speaker, around the world, politicians have been afraid to talk about this. Not you, Mr. Speaker. All right? We cannot stand up and talk about the cost of bread or trade marks and deny talking about what is going on to people just because another race does not like them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Famous. Very timely.

Any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP DeCouto?

DATA USED FOR GOVERNMENT DECISIONS

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

Pregnant pause. There was a very strong comment from the previous Member, which is not my topic, but I am just silently reflecting.

Do you know today, Mr. Speaker, we received some very good and useful reports from the Government. We received the survey about why people emigrate. I am not reflecting. This is just feeding into my theme. You know, we are hearing about the cost-of-living surveys, and we were glad to see those.

You know, I do not believe there is much new information in them for most of the people in this room, certainly not the Members on my benches with my colleagues. But these are very useful and important reports because although we do have a vast amount of anecdotal evidence that is telling us what is going on with people—that they are leaving, what is impacting their cost of living—it is always very useful to get more supporting, more granular data, more hard data. And so, we thank the Government for supplying those.

We also had the Labour Force Survey, which is very valuable information. But I note that it is from May 2024, and here we are mid-June 2025. So again [it is] valuable information. And we are mindful of the challenges that it takes to compile, to put that information together, but it is over a year old. And I know we spoke a lot in the budget debate about is the Government appropriately resourcing and bringing a sense of

urgency to deliver these important pieces of information that feed into decision making. Is Government effectively using data in its decision making?

We talked about population estimates, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the pleasure to go to the Chamber of Commerce's presentation. And for those that have not had a chance to see that, I would urge them to follow up. And they have assembled a lot of data to look at things like housing and the population in Bermuda in what I would consider a relatively creative and robust way. And it is probably true, you know, if someone was to perhaps have an issue with any one of the items of data they have martialled to put together their arguments . . . It is also true that the way they have combined all these different pieces of data from various sources paints a pretty compelling picture, and it is really hard to argue with their conclusions. And they have arrived at an estimate of our population size of call it 55,000–57,000 people. And I have to admit, Mr. Speaker, it is pretty credible.

Now, we understand that the Government in its policy making is committed to using the "official population estimates." And I did look in the digest of statistics, and I believe the year end 2023 number for that is 63,300 odd. Those are two really different numbers, Mr. Speaker. It is over [a] 10 per cent difference. We also know that the next census will not be until 2026, and again the Government has sort of committed to waiting to get the results of that and then to start combining the census information with more robust data collection [of] when people are leaving the island, for example to track emigration.

So, while we have the anecdotal survey again, which is confirming what most of us have already heard, we are not going to have actually hard numbers on this from the Government until maybe, if we are lucky, I would suggest early to mid 2027.

To me, when I think about decision making, informing the policies, looking at cost of living, for example, I consider that to be sort of driving blind, Mr. Speaker.

We also know that I had asked questions about the number [of] Corporate Income Tax (CIT) taxpayers in this House earlier, and the Government's view on that is that it is a number that cannot be known. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, I disagree quite strongly with that view because I know there are a lot of sources of information out there that probably could be used to provide a range of estimates of the number of CIT taxpayers.

We have all the alphabet organisations. I am pretty sure if Government wished to sit down with them, they could collect some valuable information from the members of those organisations. Now would that be a 100 per cent accurate number like the sort of number one would put into a financial statement? No. But would, Mr. Speaker, that be the kind of number that one could use to look ahead to guide decision making? Absolutely.

So those are some examples, Mr. Speaker. But I think you will see my broader point, which is we need to get better data. We need to get it faster. And we need to be more creative about using the various sorts of data that are out there whether it be by collaborating with the private sector, which I heard earlier that the Government is looking to do when addressing the cost-of-living crisis. So, we can look forward to that. And to be frank, to date we have been disappointed with what I would characterise as Government's relatively rigid approach to how it informs its policy making.

And while we often support Government policies (in fact I think today we are two for two, and I bet we are well over 50 per cent actually if we look at the history of this session to date), as you know, Mr. Speaker, we believe that many of the Government's policies can and should be improved. By definition if we did not think that, we would not be over here. And one of the ways we can do that is by having truly informed policy and decision making to get things right.

So my message to the Government (I know some people on the other side were not sure what I was getting at, so I am going to say it a different way) is I want you to support the public servants with the tools and resources that they need to get you the level of information to provide truly informed decision making. I want you to be creative. I want you to think outside of the box. And I want you to continue to collaborate with the private sector and all the others who can bring valuable information.

And I hope that the Government can look at places like the Chamber. And I am going to imagine that in fact the sorts of analysis that have been done by the Chamber (as one example) are being done in Government; we are just perhaps not hearing about that. And if it is being done, I would look forward to the Government bringing that to this Chamber for us to learn about, Mr. Speaker, because this country needs effective policies that work for people. And right now, I feel that we are driving blind.

So, I think that message has come through, Mr. Speaker. And I guess for some people that is not an important message, but we believe it is important over here in the One Bermuda Alliance.

Now let me pivot, and I would like to wish everyone who is listening a happy National Heroes Day weekend. And I want to wish happy Father's Day to everybody who is a father or who is playing that role for somebody else, because, as we know, it is not just a title. It is actions. So, to those listening, have a pleasant weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other MP wish to make a comment?

Premier?

DATA USED FOR GOVERNMENT DECISIONS

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

Mr. Speaker, I was just thinking that I was going to be able to wish everyone a very happy Father's Day and to ask persons to enjoy the weekend. So, I will not be long. I will just address the former Member who took his seat.

I will just say this. There is a lot of noise, but guesses on figures do not make facts. End of story. Anyone can have their views. Anyone can have their opinions. But you cannot say that we should give the public officers the tools, and when the tools are given to the public officers—increased resources, giving technical assistance, software, and all the rest—then you disagree with the result of what is produced by the technical officers. You cannot have your cake and eat it too.

Further, Mr. Speaker. I will just address this issue again as the Honourable Member continues to raise this matter related to estimates and numbers, et cetera, and different things like that. There is only one time, Mr. Speaker, that we bring estimates to this House. And that is estimates when it comes to the estimates of revenue and expenditure that we do on an annual basis for the budget. What the Standing Orders require is that we bring factual statements. And I am not going to engage in a guessing game with the Honourable—

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is misleading the House. In fact, they often bring reports such as population projections and estimates based on statistical methods. That is one example of the kinds of approximations and estimates that are done by experts, informed by data, according to well-known approaches that are useful for decision making.

So, I believe the Premier is perhaps inadvertently mistaken.

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Informed by data.

Okay. And so, when we talk about work that is done in statistics, there are international statistical norms that are informed, which the Department of Statistics works with. Those are facts. That is how we deal with those particular matters.

The Honourable Member is attempting to engage in a conversation discussion on things that are known, and I am not going to come to this House and make statements on estimates and guesses. We will bring facts.

The Honourable Member does not like the answer that is being provided, but what I am not going to do is I am not going to come here and bring things that are not supported in the basis of fact. And the matters that I have brought to this House related to the corporate income tax are supported by matters of fact. That is the reason why they have come.

So, I am going to leave that particular issue alone, and the Honourable Minister of Economy and Labour at a future time, I am sure, will speak about statistical data as I am certain that he has a significant amount of experience in that particular area.

CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Hon. E. David Burt: Moving on, Mr. Speaker, the comments from the Honourable Member for constituency number 11 ring true. And it has been something that has been very heavy on me, Mr. Speaker, because there is a really delicate line. And the delicate line that I, as leader of the Government, must tread is the fact that on both sides of you, you have two flags. And it is a reminder to every single person inside of this country that we are not a sovereign state. And the constitution that all Members under this House sit in means that none of us have responsibility of voice or any view when it comes to matters related to international affairs and policy.

Our Constitution Order expressly forbids that from the Government. When dealing with any particular matters, we are told to say that [we] do not get to state anything when it comes to matters related to foreign affairs or international relations.

So, I will say in my personal capacity, Mr. Speaker, that I completely agree with the statements that are made from the Honourable Member of constituency number 11. What we are witnessing happening on the world stage by the State of Israel is incredibly reprehensible. When we look at persons who are queuing for food, who are being shot, who are being treated in this way, the damage and destruction that is being wrought on a people, it is heart-wrenching, Mr. Speaker. It is difficult to watch.

And I will say with the greatest respect that the flag that is to your right, Mr. Speaker, the statements that have come from the United Kingdom Government do not go far enough. That is my view, my personal view.

The Government cannot take a view, and that is not the view of the Government. That is my personal view as a representative of Pembroke West Central elected to this House, Mr. Speaker. And I sincerely hope that it will be reflected as such.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on the matter related to the Honourable Member from constituency number 11 because, like him, I had to leave early prior. I thought I was going to get to do congratulations and obituaries after lunch, but we had already dispensed with those matters. So, we went directly into the Bills, Mr. Speaker.

I was at a wonderful Father's Day lunch at the Northlands Primary school where fathers were gathered to have lunch with their children. And I must say that the teachers do an amazing job throughout this entire country. And we have seen many different school-leaving ceremonies. I got to attend my daughter's school-leaving ceremony yesterday from the Northlands Primary school. [I was an] incredibly proud father as she took academic honours in academic achievement, and it was an incredibly proud moment. So, I—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: [She] takes after her mom, yes, absolutely. No question on that. That is all Kristen Burt, 100 per cent. Unfortunately, my time is given to the other matters. So that is 100 per cent Kristen Burt. I was at a Father's Day lunch, Mr. Speaker, and therefore I did miss congrats and obits.

So first I would like to be associated with remarks that were offered during that particular session to the family of the late Kendall Harvey, specifically Ms. Ernestine Evans Harvey, who as you know worked for the Government, commentates, does many things, is someone who is known to many of us and also a fellow member of the St. Paul AME Church who we see on a regular basis. And I certainly would like to extend condolences to her and to her entire family.

Also, Mr. Speaker, last Sunday when I was at my home church at the St. Paul AME, we recognised the annual . . . I want to say it is a missionary society. Someone who is a member of the AME church may correct me, but it is an annual matter that is done where there is a competition between all the local St. Paul churches for the queen. And of course, churches need to raise money and participate in events in order to do that.

On this past Sunday, the St. Paul AME family recognised Miss Eunice Jones as the queen as St. Paul retained the title and were represented by Miss Eunice Jones. And she was there in a very stunning red dress with her crown and her sash and walked down the aisle as all of the members of St. Paul stood and applauded her.

We had the opportunity to have a conversation after that to share words of greetings because, some members may or may not know, my wife (of course an active member of St. Paul's) is in charge of the Sunday school programme, and she is often assisted by Mrs. Jones' daughter Deidre Jones Munday as well. Our children were born in the hospital three days apart around the same time, and they also are neighbours. So, we get to have interactions on a regular basis.

Little did I know, Mr. Speaker, that that would be the last time that I would speak to Miss Jones. She is without question, as the Honourable Member from constituency 11 said, an institution in St. Paul. She is an amazing, amazing woman, always willing to help, always willing to greet, always there with a smile, always willing to do whatever she could for her church.

The news that reached all of us on Wednesday morning was shocking to the least. And so, for me, Mr. Speaker . . . it is clear that our St. Paul family has experienced two losses this week. And it is something that is a challenge.

So, as I did not get to do it during the congrats and obits, Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend condolences and ask the House to send condolences to the family of the late Eunice Jones, to her husband Mr. Burton Jones and also to her children Deidre Jones Mundy and LeVar Jones and to her grandchildren as well. I do not remember the name of LeVar's children, but I certainly know Kings Munday Junior and Isla Jones Mundy who we get to spend time with just about every particular week.

It is without question a sad time in the Devonshire neighbourhood, a sad time for the St. Paul church, but the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that many families are mourning. Many families are mourning throughout, and so I wish to have those condolences recognised.

FATHER'S DAY AND NATIONAL HEROES DAY WISHES

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to close out my remarks today on behalf of the Government to wish all fathers in Bermuda a very happy Father's Day.

This weekend, of course, Mr. Speaker, is National Heros Day as well. We heard a statement from the Honourable Minister earlier recognising the importance of our national heroes and the fact that the Government will continue to celebrate those persons who have been recognised as national heroes. And now we have enshrined national heroes in the National Heroes Act 2024.

So, I would ask that all persons who are celebrating in whatever way they celebrate this weekend, whether it is with the comet race, whether it is in the Carnival in Bermuda event, whether it is traditional Father's Day with family being together, recognising and celebrating that persons enjoy their holiday. Be safe. Treat each other well and remember those persons who may be mourning at this time. It is without question, Mr. Speaker, a weekend that many look forward to. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all Members on behalf of the Government will certainly support the message of wishing a happy Father's Day to all of Bermuda's fathers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Thank you, Members, for your contributions today and that everyone will have an enjoyable and safe holiday weekend.

The House stands adjourned until the 27th of June.

[Gavel]

*[At 3:35 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am,
Friday, 27 June 2025.]*

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
27 JUNE 2025
10:04 AM

Sitting Number 15 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 13 June 2025]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from the 13th of June have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?

There are none. The Minutes will be printed as confirmed.

[Minutes of 13 June 2025 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: First, we have received notice from the following Members who will be absent today: MP Leroy Bean, MP Scott Pearman, MP Vance Campbell, MP Douglas DeCouto have all indicated that they will be absent today.

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2024

The Speaker: I would also like to read out that I have received the Ombudsman Annual Report, which covers a period of the 1 January to the 31 December 2024. This report is submitted in accordance with section 24(1) and 24(3) of the Ombudsman Act 2004.

There are no other announcements.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: I believe that the Minister for the Cabinet [Office] has a paper.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER PRE-IMPLEMENTATION ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 2020–DECEMBER 2024

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Privacy Commissioner Pre-Implementation Annual Report January 2020 to December 2024 as required by section 34 of the Personal Information Protection Act 2016.

The Speaker: Thank you.

There are no other papers or communications.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have eight Statements this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sure, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

S & P AND MORNINGSTAR RATINGS BERMUDA'S STRONG RATINGS CONTINUE

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with this Honourable House encouraging news that highlights the strength of Bermuda's economy and the confidence that global investors continue to place in our Island. Mr. Speaker, two globally respected rating agencies, S&P Global and Morningstar DBRS, have completed their latest assessments of Bermuda's creditworthiness. These are independent institutions with no local political interest, whose work is based entirely on data, policy analysis and economic fundamentals.

On May 13, S&P reaffirmed Bermuda's long-term sovereign credit rating at A+ and its short-term rating at A-1 with a *Stable* outlook. Just yesterday, Morningstar went one step further, upgrading Bermuda's long-term issuer ratings to A (high) and upgrading our short-term ratings to R-1 (middle).

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: All outlooks were confirmed as *Stable*.

Mr. Speaker, this upgrade is a direct result of Bermuda's economic recovery, sound fiscal policy and credible institutions. S&P stated, "The stable outlook reflects our expectation that, . . . the local economy will remain healthy, and will support solid government finances and low debt, as well as Bermuda's . . . external asset position." While Morningstar stated, "The upgrade reflects Morningstar DBRS's view that Bermuda's robust growth outlook and steady improvement in public finances have strengthened its credit quality."

Morningstar further noted that Bermuda recorded economic growth of 4.9 per cent in 2023, with growth between 4.5 per cent and 5.0 per cent projected for 2024, surpassing previous estimates. They cited the performance of international business and the steady rebound in tourism as key contributors to this growth. Mr. Speaker, the agencies also highlighted Bermuda's improving fiscal position. Morningstar reported that our deficit has averaged just 0.4 per cent of GDP over the past four years, and the Government has achieved its first balanced budget in more than two decades.

These are not our words, Mr. Speaker, they are the findings of unbiased independent analysts. Morningstar stated plainly: "Bermuda's track record of prudent fiscal policy is a key credit strength." Morningstar also pointed to our declining debt ratio, which has fallen from 46 per cent of GDP in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, to 35 per cent in 2024, and is projected to continue falling in the years ahead.

Morningstar stated, "The government debt ratio is projected to decline over the next several years, even before accounting for the effects of the new corporate income tax." This is further evidence that the improvement in Bermuda's public finances is the result of sustained fiscal discipline and economic momentum, not dependent on future revenues. The report went on to note that, debt dynamics are expected to remain favourable even without additional revenue from the new tax, underscoring the credibility of Bermuda's current fiscal trajectory.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House will recall that in this year's budget, this Government confirmed a $19.7 million surplus for fiscal year 2024/25, the first Consolidated Fund surplus since 2003. For fiscal year 2025/26, we are predicting a surplus of $43.3 million. This progress is the result of fiscal discipline, effective policy and sustained economic momentum, which is being recognised internationally with this sovereign rating upgrade. The agencies also [referenced] the strength of Bermuda's institutions. S&P noted that, Bermuda benefits from effective policymaking and institutions, a stable political environment and a strong legal system.

Mr. Speaker, though sovereign ratings may not mean that much to the everyday Bermudian, these ratings carry significant weight. They help determine our cost of borrowing, influence investor perceptions and reflect the judgment of professional analysts who examine economies around the world. For Bermuda to maintain an A+ rating from S&P and to receive an upgrade to A (high) from Morningstar is a clear signal to the global community that this Government is managing Bermuda's fiscal affairs responsibly. Mr. Speaker, while both agencies noted longer-term challenges, such as economic concentration and demographic pressures, they also acknowledged the Government's commitment to addressing these through prudent reforms.

These include continued economic diversification as outlined in Bermuda's Economic Development Strategy; health care transformation as we move to universal health care; and the building of fiscal buffers through sustained surpluses and planned debt reduction. These efforts are aligned with the direction set out in the 2025/26 Budget. As I stated in this Honourable House last month, Bermuda has recorded four consecutive years of strong GDP growth, achieved the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years, witnessed record levels of Bermudians working in international business, and returned to a balanced budget for the first time in more than two decades.

Mr. Speaker, we also continue to invest in infrastructure, affordable housing, and health care, with capital expenditure at its highest level since 2010. We have reduced payroll taxes for 86 per cent of workers, cut energy taxes by 80 per cent, and delivered tax relief across the economy, all while delivering a budget surplus. That is responsible Progressive Labour Party governance in action.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to thank the public officers, policy advisors and all those across Government and industry who contributed to this successful outcome. The rating upgrade from Morningstar DBRS and the rating affirmation from S&P Global are testaments to our collective hard work and represent an independent vote of confidence in Bermuda's economy. The global economic environment remains uncertain; however, the findings from these independent rating agencies are a timely reminder that Bermuda remains well-positioned, both economically and institutionally, to navigate global headwinds that may arise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

TRUTH BE TOLD: YOUTH RISE AGAINST THE VIOLENCE—A MOVEMENT BEGINS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today with pride, gratitude and hopefulness to share with this Honourable House and the wider Bermuda community the profound and inspiring event held earlier this month on June 10 titled, "Truth Be Told: Youth Rise Against the Violence."

Mr. Speaker, this spectacular and moving event featured teams from five schools across Bermuda who have been working for the last several weeks on anti-violence messages. Work that culminated in those teenagers making powerful presentations to a large audience at Pier 6 on Front Street. This event was attended by some of my Cabinet colleagues, permanent secretaries, school teachers, students and a throng of parents. The positive energy throughout the building was palpable and captivating, particularly because of the authenticity and profoundness of the teenage presenters.

Mr. Speaker, this event, hosted by the Ministry of National Security, was not merely an assembly or ceremony. It was a moment of truth, courage and transformation. It marked a major inflection point in our national conversation about violence; one led convincingly by our young people.

Mr. Speaker, "Truth Be Told" forms part of our Government's broader National Violence Reduction Strategy, and specifically, our Stop the Violence Campaign, which aims to confront the root causes of violence through awareness, education and direct community engagement. The event's purpose was clear: To create a meaningful platform for Bermuda's youth to express their voices authentically on the harsh realities they encounter. It posed a challenging question to our society: What happens when we stop speaking for our youth and instead listen intently to their voices and hear their stories?

On that night, Mr. Speaker, we witnessed a compelling and inspiring answer. Mr. Speaker, over the past several months, students from CedarBridge Academy, Bermuda Institute, Mount Saint Agnes Academy, The Berkeley Institute and Success Academy boldly chose to be part of the solution to the violence affecting their lives and communities, becoming active participants and leaders in this critical conversation. Each of these five schools created original, student-led media campaigns that explored some of Bermuda's most challenging social issues. With boldness, creativity and remarkably disarming honesty, they addressed:

The Snitch Culture. Bermuda Institute's campaign, "Unlocked," bravely tackled the harmful silence that allows gang violence to persist, emphasising that real strength lies in protecting one's community through speaking out when they know something related to a violent incident. They poignantly told the audience that we can't heal unless people tell the truth and that silence has not made us safer.

Mental Health. That was CedarBridge Academy's theme. "The War Within" explored the profound connection between violence and mental and emotional trauma, highlighting the necessity of acknowledging pain and promoting emotional healing and well-being. They told us to "talk before it turns toxic" and that "violence is a scream for help."

Youth Stabbings. [The] Berkeley Institute's "One Knife, One Moment, One Chance," exposed the brutal consequences of carrying weapons, urging young people to choose life-affirming paths over impulsive actions. These students told the audience that they had "seen things they should not have had to see" and asked the profound and provocative question, "what does the future look like if we do nothing?" Part of their slogan was "A Sharp Choice of Peace", a fitting pun for knife-related violence in our community.

The Ripple Effect of Violence. That was Mount Saint Agnes Academy's campaign. "The Aftershock" passionately portrayed how acts of violence deeply impact and hurt families, schools, and entire communities, calling on everyone to help break the cycle. They refreshingly and honestly affirmed that violence was not just a public school problem and that it is indeed an "everybody" problem; and stated that violence in our community is not the Bermuda they deserve.

Gang Recruitment. Success Academy, through their campaign, "Still I Rise," explored why young people feel drawn toward gang affiliation, urging understanding and systemic change to effectively address the root causes of this problem. During this presentation, we were told that the "youth do not just

speak, they carry voices" and that our youth need "more consistent father figures."

Mr. Speaker, these campaigns, created alongside Bermuda's talented videographers and artists, including Ra'ees Tankard, Dion Greene, Marq Rodriguez, Kyle Hamilton and Jayde Gibbons were raw, moving and unforgettable. They offered a mirror to our society, challenging us to reflect deeply on the state of our community and our collective responsibility for change. Each of these presentations, Mr. Speaker, merits celebration and recognition. Each student who took part demonstrated immense courage and leadership by being a part of this project. They turned their pain into power, their experiences into messages, and their voices into catalysts for lasting change.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to recognise and celebrate the remarkable students who were honoured on last Tuesday night for their outstanding contributions to this powerful movement. The Voice of Change Award celebrated students who bravely and authentically raised their voices to address difficult truths about community violence. Their honesty, valour and ability to speak forcefully yet vulnerably helped spark meaningful reflections and deeper understanding in our community. Recipients of the Voice of Change Award were

- Giana Romeo of Mount Saint Agnes Academy;
- Jayden Belboda-Ravenau of The Berkeley Institute;
- Ceszinee Cox of The Berkeley Institute.

Mr. Speaker, the Creative Vision Award recognised students who showed exceptional creativity, originality and artistic leadership. These students played key roles in visually expressing their campaign messages, demonstrating strong design direction, symbolic storytelling and an imaginative approach that captured the depth and seriousness of their messages. Recipients of the Creative Vision Award were

- Jayce Fough of The Berkeley Institute;
- Kamaya Lynch-Wade of Mount Saint Agnes;
- Kacia Barnett of The Bermuda Institute.

The Impact in Action Award is a team award celebrating the school campaign judged to have the greatest potential to inspire real-world change in Bermuda. Judged live by a panel using criteria such as clarity of message, creativity, community relevance and delivery. The Impact in Action Award was awarded to the students of The Berkeley Institute for their exceptional campaign, "One Knife, One Moment, One Chance."

Mr. Speaker, each of these young awardees, and indeed all participants, have shown exemplary commitment and character. While we recognise these outstanding achievements, it is vital to reiterate that every student who participated is a winner. Each one of them is a young leader in our community and their bravery in confronting uncomfortable truths should inspire us all. I extend special thanks to our dedicated sponsors: One Communications, MS Reinsurance and Nspire Bermuda. Their generosity and genuine commitment to youth empowerment made this initiative possible and we sincerely applaud them for supporting such a momentous and meaningful programme. Mr. Speaker, our gratitude also extends to the dedicated educators at each school, as well as the passionate members of our Gang Violence Reduction Team, led by our now-colleague MP Bishop Leroy Bean, and including Darren Woods, Bishop Lynn Landy and Cadre Smith. Their guidance and tireless work provided the safe space these students needed to flourish during this project.

Mr. Speaker, the "Truth Be Told" event is just the beginning of an important movement in Bermuda. A movement led by our youth and supported by us all. The campaigns presented will soon be widely accessible on social media platforms, including YouTube, Instagram and our dedicated website [www.stoptheviolencebda.com]. I implore everyone to engage with these youth-led campaigns, reflect on their messages and turn their calls for change into action. These campaigns mark the beginning of an ongoing, youth-led movement that will continue to grow, educate and transform the culture of silence into one of courage, truth and healing. Bermuda's young people have spoken clearly: The violence impacting their lives is not theirs alone to solve. It is ours collectively. The change for which they are advocating requires each of us to take responsibility, to step out of the shadows of silence and into the light of active participation.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let us honour these courageous young people by ensuring that "Truth be Told" is not merely a powerful moment, but a lasting movement, and a commitment to a safer, more compassionate, healthy and just Bermuda. Because, Mr. Speaker, when our youth rise, we must rise with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement is from the Minister for the Cabinet [Office].

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: But Minister, before I acknowledge you, I just want to acknowledge in the Gallery we have visiting with us today Dr. Raddic. Am I correct? Dr. Raddic? And Dr. Raddic is here off a cruise ship, but not as a tourist. She is one of those who offers services as a medical team on the different cruises. So, I think she has a number selected for this season on the cruise ships coming in and out of Bermuda. We welcome you to Parliament this morning.

Now, I am trying to remember correctly. Some of us may know. She is not politically connected here, but your brother-in-law was a politician in one of our sister islands, if I am correct. Right? So, we understand your political interest in visiting us here this morning. Enjoy your time here and enjoy your stay in Bermuda. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

[Ministerial Statements, continuing]

The Speaker: Minister.

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

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025, TABLING OF

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, later today I will be tabling the Building Amendment Act 2025. This Bill addresses the broader and ongoing discussion about streamlining the Department of Planning's procedures, particularly concerning building permits.

Mr. Speaker, in a Ministerial Statement delivered to this House on May 30, I spoke frankly about the public perception and the genuine frustrations surrounding our planning system. Whether you are a homeowner renovating, a small business expanding or a developer shaping the next phase of our Island's growth, the message remains consistent: The process can feel too slow, overly rigid and unclear. That is a message we have heard, and this Bill is part of our response.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reforms I announced on 30 May was the development of a Competent Persons Scheme (or CPS). I mentioned then that legislative changes were underway to enable the introduction of this scheme. Initially aimed at solar installers, the CPS would allow qualified professionals to self-certify their work without needing stage-by-stage inspections, while still being subject to oversight and spot checks by the Department of Planning. But let me be clear, the CPS is just one example. The amendment before us, the amendment that I will be laying today, lays the groundwork for many such modernisations, including more efficient reviews, better use of professionals and more innovative building permit management.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes a simple procedural change to amend section 23 of the Bermuda Building Act 1988, replacing the affirmative resolution process with the negative resolution process for regulations made under that section. This will allow technical regulations, such as those required for CPS initiatives, to be updated more effectively, without needing to refer each change back to the full House for approval, while still ensuring parliamentary oversight and accountability. This change enables us to act more swiftly when appropriate, while maintaining the standards and protections the public expects. It supports our broader goal to develop a more responsive, reliable and efficient planning system. This change also aligns with our goal to

- be builders, not blockers;
- respect the time and deadlines of applicants and professionals, without compromising the role of the government; and most of all
- reflect the kind of practical reform the public has asked for and that we in this House have a duty to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that all Honourable Members, on both sides of this House, will recognise the value in this small but powerful amendment, and I look forward to a constructive and forward-looking debate when the Bill is brought forward for a second reading in two weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Oops, sorry. I jumped over the Minister of Health. Minister of Health, why did I do that?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I do not know, but thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

The Speaker: There you go.

PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, today I rise to address a public health issue that affects our youth, our families and the integrity of our regulatory system—the unchecked proliferation and marketing of nicotine-containing products.

Mr. Speaker, this matter directly relates to a commitment that the Government made in the 2025 Throne Speech and that I reiterated in this Honourable House on the 28 March. On that occasion, I highlighted the role that smoking and vaping play in contributing to respiratory diseases, cancers and cardiovascular issues. In response, the Government pledged to advance new restrictions on flavoured vaping products as a concrete step towards reducing harm.

Mr. Speaker, the urgency of that commitment is underscored by the evolving landscape of nicotine use. Nicotine, while long associated with traditional tobacco use, is increasingly being repackaged and marketed in modern formats including vapes, oral pouches, lozenges and gum, often with flavours and packaging that are unmistakably appealing to youth.

These products, some of which were originally developed to support smoking cessation, are now being sold in convenience stores, gas stations and duty-free outlets in a manner that trivialises their medical intent and bypasses appropriate health oversight.

Mr. Speaker, global evidence is clear. According to the World Health Organization and the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, nicotine is a highly addictive substance that can harm adolescent brain development, impact memory and concentration and increase the risk of future substance abuse. Flavoured nicotine products, in particular, have been found to increase initiation rates among youth and Bermuda is not immune to this trend.

Mr. Speaker, we are now witnessing the sale of fruit-flavoured vapes and nicotine pouches, lozenges and gum being sold outside of pharmacies, often without age verification. They are often packaged like candy and displayed next to chocolate bars at the checkout. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. These are medical products that should only be sold in registered pharmacies, as outlined in the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979.

Mr. Speaker, in response to this growing concern, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Chief Medical Officer and the Bermuda Health Council, will enforce the current restrictions requiring that nicotine products be sold only by registered pharmacists in registered pharmacies and, additionally, begin urgent legislative reforms to strengthen public protections. Mr. Speaker, these include:

1. Public education and retail engagement. We will launch an awareness campaign and provide clear guidance to retailers to avoid unlawful sales and protect public health. We will reaffirm and enforce the requirements that nicotine products must be sold only by registered pharmacists in registered pharmacies, with appropriate labelling, dosing limits and oversight as set forth in law.
2. Clarifying legal restrictions. We will amend legislation to further define nicotine-containing products, ensuring that newer forms like pouches and lozenges fall explicitly under the same regulatory scrutiny as liquid-nicotine used in vapes.
3. Age restrictions. We will introduce clear statutory restrictions prohibiting the sale of all nicotine-containing products to individuals under the age of 18, aligned with the protections already in place for tobacco under the Tobacco Control Act 2015.
4. Flavour Bans. We will restrict or ban non-therapeutic flavours that are designed to appeal to youth, such as candy, dessert and fruity variants, except for those explicitly approved for smoking cessation in clinical settings.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to closing the loopholes that have allowed these harmful products to be sold unchecked and without proper control. While we respect the role of legitimate smoking cessation aids, these must be distributed responsibly and only for their intended use, not disguised as lifestyle accessories for our young people. Mr. Speaker, I urge all parents, educators, retailers and health care professionals to join us in this effort to safeguard Bermuda's young people. The future of our country depends on the health and the well-being of the next generation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Now the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. I think I have you in the right order this time, how is that?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

JOB READINESS PROGRAMME

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in this Honourable House this morning to applaud the work of the Office of Youth Affairs, our Youth Services Team, on the successful launch and initial outcomes of their Job Readiness Programme.

Mr. Speaker, this cornerstone initiative directly supports goal number four of the Government's National Youth Policy which is to "Increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people." This pivotal Job Readiness Programme has been strategically developed to provide Bermuda's young people with essential skills and work experience to prepare them for formal employment options. Mr. Speaker, this programme is a result of years of hard work carried out by the staff in the Office of Youth Affairs. A programme that began as a kernel has blossomed into a bountiful crop and this is truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, the Counsellor-in-Training (CIT) programme was initiated several years ago at our community centres under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation. Inspired by international youth development models from organisations such as the Boys and Girls Club, CHARACTER COUNTS! and the YMCA, Bermuda's CIT programme focused on positive youth character development. This programme not only engaged participants during the summer, but it also provided essential leadership skills and promoted community involvement in a safe environment. Mr. Speaker, many participants who showed an interest in becoming summer day camp counsellors progressed from junior counsellors to camp counsellors, and some even secured employment with the Department of Youth and Sports.

Mr. Speaker, during the summer months, the CIT programme provided activities for primary school students. However, it did not include provisions for high school students. Following advocacy by parents, the programme was expanded to include high school students. Consequently, a Leadership-In-Training [LIT] initiative was introduced to extend opportunities during mid-term holidays and uphold the core leadership objectives. Mr. Speaker, the Job Readiness Programme, is a hybrid of the CIT and the LIT launched in the summer of 2024. This programme was specifically offered to high school students in both public and private schools from S1 to S4. Mr. Speaker, the Office of Youth Affairs staff reached out to school principals and counsellors, attended school assemblies, shared information via social media and provided Government press releases in order to raise awareness of this beneficial programme.

Mr. Speaker, the programme's structure was meticulously crafted to ensure participants gain valuable real-world experience. Successful applicants who were able to meet the entry requirements participated in a comprehensive orientation session, completion of a two-week volunteer service period at either the Eastern or Western Zone Community Centres. These youth were to then commit to a minimum of five hours of work per day during the school term breaks. This immersive approach ensured students develop a strong work ethic and necessary practical skills. Mr. Speaker, the advantages of a programme such as this are substantial for young individuals. It fosters skill development in various areas, including communication, leadership, teamwork, critical caregiving skills, how to create safe and nurturing environments for children and develop crucial soft skills like time-management, self-control, conflict resolution and resilience among others.

Mr. Speaker, the first cohort of the Job Readiness Programme saw an enthusiastic response with 10 high school students registering. They demonstrated remarkable dedication with several students committing to staying with the programme for the entire summer, immersing themselves in the world of an Afterschool Programme worker by shadowing programme workers both in the field and in the office, gaining invaluable work experience. Mr. Speaker, an important aspect of the programme is its direct pathway to employment. Senior high school students were eligible for paid positions as Afterschool Programme workers. Additionally, students could earn community service hours and receive an individualised professional reference letter for use in future job applications. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report on the immediate success of this pathway. From the inaugural cohort, four outstanding youth were hired into formal employment. I, alongside the Office of Youth Affairs, proudly acknowledge the accomplishments of these young individuals who have only recently graduated from high school and are now embarking on their next educational journey. Those persons, Mr. Speaker, are:

- Jaidan Durrant. He emphasised learning much from coworkers and enjoying interactions with children, taking away self-control and conflict resolution skills.
- Makaylie Smith highlighted the energy of the children and learning patience as key takeaways from the programme.
- Deja Steede found meeting and interacting with the children helped her become more open-minded.
- Daetona Simons cherished the relationships built with staff and children, noting the programme pushed her to be more disciplined and reliable.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the Senior Programme Supervisor, Ms. Renee James, who designed the Job Readiness Programme. She heard the voices of Bermuda's young people and created a programme that spoke to their exact needs. The success of this first cohort underscores how The Office of Youth Affairs' staff shows unwavering commitment to the National Youth Policy's goals. Mr. Speaker, the next cohort of the Job Readiness Programme is set to begin on 30 June. The Office of Youth Affairs is targeting a cohort of 12 youths. I encourage interested young people to apply at www.ospbermuda.bm that we may continue to support the next generation of Bermuda's youth workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

BERMUDA'S COST OF LIVING: COST OF LIVING SUMMIT 2025

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This morning I rise to provide an update to this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda regarding the 2025 Cost of Living Summit, which was held on June 25 at the Hamilton Princess.

The event brought together 258 residents and stakeholders and was live streamed to ensure broad access. Mr. Speaker, this Summit marked a significant milestone in the Government's ongoing efforts to address the cost of living in Bermuda. The Ministry of Home Affairs is especially grateful to the stakeholders who joined the Government for a day of candid and constructive dialogue on key issues impacting affordability; imports, food security, utilities, housing and health care. The Ministry was intentional in selecting a

diverse cross-section of participants, ensuring that the discussions reflected a broad range of expertise, casting an informed light on the lived experiences, conversations that are too often confined to siloed forums. This integrated approach allowed for a more fulsome examination of the interconnected drivers of cost.

Mr. Speaker, despite some early scepticism, the Ministry was clear in its intent to approach the cost of living and affordability [crisis] differently and to invite collective action. The Ministry acknowledged that it was neither feasible nor effective to place the full burden of solving this issue on the Government but rather invited collaboration. The Summit was a declaration that shared responsibility is essential to meaningful change. Mr. Speaker, the Summit began with presentations from Economist Craig Simmons and Dr. Jahni Smith, who outlined findings from the Ministry-commissioned Cost of Living Survey conducted in March of this year. Their analysis framed the Summit's panel discussions, highlighting the shift from a tourism-based to an international business-led economy and the resultant pressures on housing, food, health care and utilities. These insights grounded the dialogue in data and gave voice to the lived realities of residents and businesses in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the industry panel discussion, moderated by Ms. Jessica Mello, focused on Bermuda's supply chain challenges. This discussion confirmed the Island's heavy reliance on imports but challenged the need to explore trade diversification and expanded partnerships with Latin America and/or the Caribbean. These insights included the cost impact of empty return freight and the untapped potential of digitisation to lower logistics costs. Following this, Mrs. Liana Nanang Omodele led a panel featuring restaurant operators and food retailers and wholesalers which explored the drivers of food pricing, including duties, shipping and operational overheads. The panel advocated for consumer education, regulatory reform, agriculture policy review and the value of white-label and non-branded goods as cost-saving alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, the local agriculture and fisheries panel, moderated by Mr. Arthur Wightman, emphasised the critical role of local production in improving affordability and accessibility. The discussion highlighted the underutilisation of arable land, the importance of improved access to water and the need for education and public engagement in food production. Panellists also recommended revisiting legislative restrictions to enable responsible import expansion while ensuring protection from invasive species.

Mr. Speaker, a panel led by Mr. Ryan Perinchief addressed Bermuda's utility sector. The discussion focused on the urgent need to modernise and regulate all essential utilities, and reduce energy, water and telecommunications costs, recognising that this can happen through fuel diversification, improved infrastructure and adoption of international best practices to manage cost burdens. The panel moderated by Mr. Daniel Woods addressed unlocking Bermuda's housing. It identified limited supply, outdated regulations and high construction costs as major contributors to the current state. Recommendations included reforming planning policies, advancing landlord and tenant legislative reform and fostering public-private partnerships to enable innovative and cost-efficient construction techniques.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the panel sessions, the Summit featured two presentations from my colleagues, the Hon. Kim Wilson, Minister of Health and the Hon. Zane De Silva, Minister of Housing and Municipalities. The updates highlighted Government strategies to ensure equitable health care access and to increase the supply of affordable housing. Mr. Speaker, the Summit met its core objective to educate, inform, invite feedback and demonstrate the power and potential of collective problem-solving against the backdrop of real data provided by the survey which validated and contextualised the lived experiences of the public to inform policy refinement, legislative reform and near-term action.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is now in the process of collating the Summit's feedback and combining it with the survey data. A report will be tabled in this Honourable House as promised and published for the public to capture both.

Further, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Ministry has already begun advancing relief and has conducted legislative and policy review of key import-related laws, revision of landlord and tenant legislation, with consultation expected to begin in July of this year. We have also conducted successful industry stakeholder engagement to confirm short near-term solutions. The Ministry is particularly grateful that industry partners in the retail, wholesale and utilities sectors have already committed to doing things to improve affordability. These commitments will be published on the costofliving.gov.bm website in the coming weeks.

The Ministry also wishes to thank the Cost of Living Commission for its continued support. Note that later today, the Commission will convene to review the Summit's outcomes and contribute to the public communication of the Ministry's affordability strategy, including its implementation roadmap and regulatory reform timeline. This final report will include both the data, summit costs and the solutions that will be advanced toward affordability.

Mr. Speaker, the Summit received an overwhelming volume of positive feedback from both the public and stakeholders alike. As the Ministry continues to lead the Government's cost of living agenda, this feedback affirms the strategic direction taken and reinforces the necessity of engaging across political lines, sectors, and communities constructively.

Mr. Speaker, the Summit concluded with a call to action. Attendees were invited to sign a Commitment Wall, symbolising their role in creating a more

affordable Bermuda, and to complete feedback surveys on the public policy proposals discussed. These surveys will remain live on the Summit website until July 4, and all residents are encouraged to participate. Mr. Speaker, the true success of the Summit lies not only in the policies it inspired, but in the collective spirit it reignited. Through the Summit, we were reminded that personal responsibility is a seed, but it must be watered by collaboration and shared resolve. Further, we were reminded that the road to a more affordable Bermuda is not paved by Government alone but rather walked together, by every household, business and representative.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Home Affairs has demonstrated that it is committed to action over rhetoric. I thank the members of the Ministry team, industry leaders that volunteered their time to provide direction and the Government's communications team. This Cost of Living Summit confirmed that when government, industry and the community unite, not just in words but in work, real progress is not only possible, but it is inevitable. The 2025 Cost of Living Summit will be remembered as the moment in our history that Bermuda did not just talk about relief, but we built it together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

INVESTMENT IN SPORTS AND ATHLETES

Hon. Owen Darrell: I rise today to share with this Honourable House recent developments in the area of sport, highlighting our continued commitment to recognising student athletes, supporting elite athletes and investing in the development of the National Sports Governing Bodies. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 12, the Department of Sport and Recreation hosted the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme [NJASP] at the Butterfield and Vallis Conference Room at the Bermuda College. This annual initiative aims to recognise and provide development opportunities to Bermudian junior athletes between the ages of 15 and 19, who clearly show commitment, promise and achievement in their respective sport.

This year, Mr. Speaker, $50,000 was allocated to 10 recipients to continue development overseas and five National Sport Governing Bodies to bring in coaches. These contributions will support and provide opportunities for Bermudian junior athletes to reach their full potential and hopefully represent Bermuda at major sporting events in the future.

Mr. Speaker, during the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme ceremony, $10,000 was allocated to the recipient of the Dame Flora Duffy Award. The Dame Flora Duffy award contribution is intended to provide training and competition inducements to a promising athlete between the ages of 19 and 23, who are likely to achieve elite athlete status at the senior level given their continued participation and commitment to their sport. The 2025 recipient of this award was Bermuda National Athletics Association athlete, Ryan Outerbridge.

Ryan Outerbridge is a standout distance runner who has made significant strides in both national and collegiate athletics. A senior at Franklin Pierce University, Outerbridge has earned NCAA Division II All-Region honours in the 1,500 meters, the steeplechase, and the 5,000 meters, underscoring his versatility and endurance. Mr. Outerbridge has also participated in the annual Bermuda Half Marathon and has impressively burst on to the scene as runner-up for the past two consecutive years. His performances have made him a standout competitor in this iconic race. It is hoped that Mr. Outerbridge will represent Bermuda at major festivals in the very near future. Also, Mr. Speaker, I must add that Mr. Outerbridge is a former student of mine.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Deputy [Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, June 19, the Department of Sport and Recreation in collaboration with the Bermuda School Sports Federation (BSSF) hosted the annual Denton Hurdle Memorial Awards ceremony at the Warwick Academy. This prestigious event honours Bermuda's most promising primary, middle and senior school student athletes who demonstrate outstanding sporting talent, leadership and community engagement. This year, 57 student athletes were recognised across the three divisions. I take this opportunity to congratulate the 2025 Denton Hurdle Awards winners.

- The Primary School Champions were Keirra Broadley-Samuels from St. George's Prep. and Owen Fosker from Warwick Academy.
- Middle School Champions were Avery Taylor from the Bermuda High School and Chaz Edmead from Saltus Grammar School.
- The Senior Champions were Carina Bortoli from Somersfield Academy and Mr. Khari Sharrieff from the Berkeley Institute.

Mr. Speaker, I must also pause here and note that Khari Sharrieff, who is an exceptional athlete in football and athletics, has won this prestigious award at every school level, primary, middle and high school.

There is a plethora of potential that lies within our school system and these recipients represent the very best of Bermuda's young talent as they serve as shining examples. Mr. Speaker, in line with the objectives of the Bermuda National Sports Policy 2022–2027, I am pleased to confirm that the continued delivery of the Elite Athlete Sponsorship Initiative. This programme provides critical funding to Bermuda's top-performing athletes from recognised National Sports Governing Bodies to support their training, their competition and their international representation efforts. For fiscal year 2025/26, Mr. Speaker, $154,500 was allocated to 25 elite athletes, from 15 different sports, allowing them to pursue excellence on the global stage. This initiative directly supports Goal 2.1 of the National Sports Policy, to "Increase Government funding for high performance athletes and teams by 30 per cent." It reflects the Government's belief that our athletes should not be limited by financial barriers, and they strive to achieve sporting excellence.

Mr. Speaker, the various sports that are supported by elite athletes participate include the following:

- cycling;
- athletics;
- bowling;
- swimming;
- triathlon;
- pickleball;
- archery;
- motorcycle racing;
- para-athletics;
- wushu;
- rugby;
- boccia; and
- motocross.

And again, I must say, Mr. Speaker, "swimming."

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to report on the allocations under the Sport Investment Programme [SIP]. This programme provides annual funding to recognised National Sports Governing Bodies to assist with their operational capacity, athletic development pathways, coaching education and grassroots expansion efforts. In 2025/26, a total of over $2 million, Mr. Speaker, was allocated through the SIP to 26 National Sports Governing Bodies and associated programmes which is an increase compared to last fiscal year in which the allocation was under $2 million. These investments are the cornerstone of this Government's commitment to the long-term development and sustainability of sport in Bermuda. The benefits of SIP are wide-ranging, from enhancing coaching capacity, to enabling more inclusive access to sports across all communities and higher performance.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these three initiatives—the Denton Hurdle Awards, the Elite Athlete Sponsorship and the Sport Investment Programme—demonstrate this Government's holistic approach to sport development. From recognising the next generation of talent, to empowering elite athletes and strengthening sport governance, we remain steadfast in our mission to ensure that sport continues to be a powerful vehicle for national pride, social cohesion and individual empowerment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I believe you have a second Statement. Would you like to do that one as well?

Hon. Owen Darrell: I do, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

LOREN RESORT—EXPANDING TOURISM INVENTORY

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware of the acquisition of the former Elbow Beach property by Sardis Developments Limited, the owners of The Loren Hotel at Pink Beach. Mr. Speaker, this acquisition has been welcomed and represents a firm signal of the confidence in Bermuda's tourism destination. Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise this Honourable House and the public that it is proposed to afford relief to the developers of this new hotel consistent with that which is available under the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

Mr. Speaker, the developers intend to expand the existing Loren footprint to now include this newly purchased site, operating one hotel product in two separate locations. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be familiar with the scope of the relief which includes full relief from customs duty in respect to any of the building materials, furnishings, fixtures and equipment which are necessary for the building, furnishing and equipping, repair, maintenance, rebuilding, refurbishing or replacing of the resort. Full exemption from the hotel occupancy tax otherwise payable in respect of the resort. Full exemption from the employer's share of the payroll tax otherwise payable in respect of the person's employment by the resort. All for 15 years in keeping with the Act as well as six years of relief from land tax. Mr. Speaker, the proposed redevelopment is set to comprise 176 keys including hotel rooms, luxury villas and luxury condominiums. Honourable Members will have seen recent media coverage of the developer's early action regarding the site and the proposed demolition of the existing hotel building.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that there is bipartisan support for Bermuda's tourism growth and the action required to increase Bermuda's tourism inventory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers this morning.

Thank you for your participation, Ministers.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: The Question Period for this morning, there are no written questions. The questions will come from Statements given this morning. Members, a few of the Statements this morning have produced questions.

The first Statement this morning that has a question would that from the Minister of National Security. Minister MP King would like to put a question to you this morning.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: MP, you have the floor.

QUESTION 1: TRUTH BE TOLD: YOUTH RISE AGAINST THE VIOLENCE—A MOVEMENT BEGINS

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members and the listening public.

Regarding the statements made by the [Minister of] National Security, I wholeheartedly . . . and I think the whole House can be associated with the great work that the kids are doing to promote anti-violence and finding appropriate non-violent means of resolving conflicts. So, we are fully in support of that initiative.

Questions that I have are related to what resources the Government is allocating to the initiative. I want to understand, is it a programme or is it an initiative that is driven by the youth themselves? Or is it an initiative or programme driven by National Security? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I welcome the question from the MP from consistency 10.

Mr. Speaker, in answer to his question, the initiative comes under the Government's National Violence [Reduction] Strategy. And a part of our strategy is to involve the youth, so we have provided the financial resources. But the human resources have come from the children themselves. And hats off to them because the schools that were involved really produced some great skits (so to speak). And hopefully going forward we'll be expanding this initiative to other high schools and perhaps middle schools. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that young persons are being recruited at a younger and younger age, what is the plan to address recruitment in primary schools and middle schools? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thanks for that, Mr. Speaker.

I would like some clarity . . . recruitment for . . . what are we talking about?

Mr. Robert King: Gangs and crimes involving drugs and violence, knife crime in particular.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, that is not a part of my Statement, but I have no problem saying that the overarching strategy of the national anti-violence campaign by this Government is to address prevention, intervention and rehabilitation. A part of prevention is to try to help youngsters who are on the cusp of being recruited, be steered away from it. So that's the part of our anti-violence strategy campaign that is geared toward trying to steer youngsters away from a life of untoward behaviour.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

Second supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: New question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: TRUTH BE TOLD: YOUTH RISE AGAINST THE VIOLENCE—A MOVEMENT BEGINS

Mr. Robert King: The question I ask is, What data and what research is guiding and informing the anti-violence strategy? Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, again, that's not from my Statement. But data gets collected, it's ongoing, you know, the data is there, and it is liquid. So, it is always ongoing.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Just try to remember the question should come out of the content of the Statement that was written.

Mr. Robert King: I take that into consideration, Mr. Speaker, understanding that when we are—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Thank you for that.

When we are—

The Speaker: So, is this a supplementary or third question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: This would be a supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Understanding data is fluid and is readily available, is the Honourable Minister aware that the Bermuda Police Service's website has been down since 31 May due to the cyberattack?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I am trying to tie that into [the Minister's] Statement. But that's always the challenge of it.

Mr. Robert King: No, no. The supplementary was based on the fact that data is readily available and the data and the crime statistics would have come from the Bermuda Police Service. It is difficult to get those statistics and data if the website has been down since 31 May. That's the point I'm making. Thank you. That's my last submission.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: That is not a point from out of my Statement. But if the Honourable Member has any other questions that are outside of the scope of the Ministerial Statement I presented today, as I have always said to him, I welcome any questions that he may have.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No further questions?

Mr. Robert King: No, that's it.

The Speaker: Okay. No further questions. Thank you.

Members, those are the only questions for that Statement.

The next Statement that has questions is a Statement from the Minister of Health.

Minister, MP Tucker would like to put questions to you.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: PUBLIC HEALTH RISK OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Ms. Robin Tucker: My first question is, I'd like to know if the Minister can clarify how sales for appropriate use, sales of, obviously, the products that were named, vapes and gum and all of that, how the sales for appropriate use will be controlled to meet the intended outcome.

Just for clarification, if I may, of the question I am asking. So, the same way that we can walk into a pharmacy and get . . . I don't know, Advil. At one point you had to get it from the pharmacist. Right? You walk in, the pharmacist asks you no questions. She hands you the Advil. Right? So, I am just trying to get clarification. Can the Minister give some insight into how selling the . . . how the sale of these products specifically by registered pharmacies and pharmacists will assist in achieving the ultimate goal of protecting youth and the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, the sale of these nicotine products is prohibited unless under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act and, as such, the pharmacies have the pharmacy inspectors who come under the Bermuda Health Council and they go and monitor the pharmacist to make sure that they are compliant with the legislation. So, the enforcement arm of this legislation will be governed by the pharmacy inspector.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Supplementary or new question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, a supplementary, please.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Can the Minister tell us how often the pharmacy inspector actually visits, what the cycle is that the pharmacy inspector visits the pharmacies to ensure compliance? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information, but what I can assure members of the public of is that during the course of her inspection she will be ensuring that retail establishments that are prohibited from offering for sale nicotine products will have to be compliant with the law and that also goes as it relates to the environmental health who will do the inspections as it relates to retail establishments.

The Speaker: Supplementary or second question?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Supplementary. Okay.

MP Cannonier, Opposition Whip.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you. Thank you, very much. And good morning, colleagues.

In accordance with the question that was asked, there seems to be some confusion in that for some of these products [they] can actually be purchased from wholesalers who are not of a medical background or have certificates for certain products. So how does it . . . [there] seems to be a gap there on how we prevent retailers from getting some of these prohibited products into other stores outside of pharmacies. And I'm hoping that the Minister maybe can give some clarification. Or are they looking into this? Because, just to clarify, what we don't want is a retailer being able to get these products outside of maybe buying it from, you know, Bermuda Drug Company or that kind of a thing. And if Bermuda Drug Company is actually bringing these products in, then why would they be selling it to retailers who are not supposed to be selling it?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. I can't speak to the Bermuda Drug Company as to why they are selling items to retailers that are prohibited. But I can say—

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I did not say that Bermuda Drug Company was selling these products. I was using that as an example. So, to say that they are doing it would be unfair to Bermuda Drug Company. And I think it would be unfair to me because that is not what I am saying. But there are wholesalers selling the product.

The Speaker: Okay.

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

As the Ministerial Statement speaks to, what we are trying to prevent is unlawful sale of nicotine products that are not being sold pursuant to the Pharmacy and Poisons Act and instead are being sold by retail establishments. That is against the law. And what we are doing and what the Statement speaks to is the [assurance] of public safety, particularly as it relates to our youth.

What is going on with respect to wholesalers and how the products are being passed through, is not the subject matter of this Ministerial Statement. The subject matter of this is to ensure that retailers are compliant with the legislation as it relates to their inability to sell nicotine products in their establishment. That is what this Statement is about, and that is what we will be enforcing in law, not least of which it is not an old law . . . I'm sorry. It is not a new law; this has been on the books for decades. And in addition to that, we are ensuring that we are protecting public health, particularly as it relates to our youth.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary or . . . Is this your second question or supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: It is a second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: PUBLIC HEALTH RISK OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, my second question is, the Minister did mention that this is just an enforcement of the current law. Right? But I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether there has been any conversation with the retailers who have been selling these products for ages. Right? So, has there been any conversation with them on the fact that the laws are now going to be enforced?

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, admittedly, a few years ago we did go through the Chamber of Commerce and had these discussions, particularly when we saw the proliferation of vapes. We will continue the engagement. As I have indicated in my Ministerial Statement those conversations will take place. But at the end of the day, the law is the law. And I am not sure that it is necessary for steps to be taken to enforce what is on the legal books. At the end of the day, again, we have received evidence—

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —that supports the increased use of nicotine products by our youth. We have seen from evidence from WHO the adverse impact it has on our youth and our developing brains. So, we recognise that the evidence supports restriction of nicotine products for our youth. We have also seen an increase in nicotine products being made available in retail establishments which, again, is contrary to the Pharmacy and Poisons Act. In fact, nicotine is classified under section 4B(2) *[sic]* (I believe) of the Pharmacy and Poisons Act as a poison. So, we are simply enforcing the law that is on the books.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplemental to that, yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, considering that we have received this information that suggests it is being sold in some of these other retailers that are not authorised to sell it, the Honourable Member said that they can see where there is an increased use of nicotine (as she just stated) being used by young people. Is [the Honourable Member] also saying or correlating that to the fact that they are actually buying it, underage people are buying this stuff from retailers as well?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, again, the issue as it relates to ensuring the protection of our young people is paramount. And because nicotine is a poison, it is specifically prohibited from being made available unless it is by a registered pharmacist and a registered pharmacy. What we are recognising, Mr. Speaker, and there is evidence that these items are being sold in retail establishments, in fact, some are even right next to the chocolate bars. And questions are not being asked as it relates to the age of the individuals. I myself walked into an establishment and saw the items right by the counter. And in fact, I looked twice because I thought they were like the Ice Breakers . . . what are those little . . . those little candies. And I had to look twice because I saw them and like *What is that?* And then I looked closer. And I asked the person at the cash register, and granted he was a young individual, and I said, *What are the restrictions of selling those*? And he said, *Well, I don't know*. And this is a well-known establishment. So, the reality is this is about public health and protecting our most vulnerable, and that is our youth.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Supplementary or new question?

You have a supplementary or your third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: I have supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: But first, I would like to say that of course we support protecting our youth, but also we need to make sure that what we're doing makes sense. Right? For all parties.

So, I would just like to ask for those retailers that are currently, who have been allowed to sell these products, notwithstanding the fact that the law has not been enforced until now, but what are the retailers . . . what are their requirements as it relates to this particular now-enforced law? So, for people who already have supplies, people who have already been selling, what is their requirement? What are they supposed to do with their supplies now? So how does that work? If the Minister can provide some clarity around that, that would be helpful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, what has changed is the availability and the marketing of these products. The short answer to that question is it's illegal. Trash it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Third question or are you complete?

QUESTION 3: PUBLIC HEALTH RISK OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, the third question is very similar to what MP Cannonier had asked. So, my third question is I'd like to know if . . . because we've been talking about retailers, but I would like to know if these products will be banned across the board, so the public can't even import their own items as well, right?

I recognise that the law has not been enforced until now, so I'm just trying to get clarification because not only do I want to know but other people want to know and have that clarification too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Let me let me break this down, Mr. Speaker. Under the Tobacco Control Act [2015 combustible tobacco products, cigars, cigarettes, et cetera, are permitted to be sold in retail establishments. Under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act, Schedule 4B *[sic]*, speaks specifically to nicotine products. And the only establishments under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act that are permitted to sell nicotine products are registered pharmacists under a registered pharmacy.

There's a distinction. The Pharmacy and Poisons Act speaks to nicotine. The Tobacco Control Act 2015 speaks to tobacco. If it's a nicotine product, it's classified as a poison. So therefore, under the controls the only persons who can sell poisons are pharmacists and registered pharmacies.

Under the Tobacco Control Act a retail establishment can sell combustible tobacco products: cigarettes, cigars, rolling papers, et cetera, et cetera. Therein lies the distinction. Tobacco comes under the Tobacco Control Act, which can be sold in retail establishments. Poisons and nicotine come from the Pharmacy and Poisons Act which can only be sold in registered pharmacies by registered pharmacists. Thank you.

The Speaker: Any further questions? None?

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

The Speaker: Minister, do you mind if I ask something? Just for my own clarity? That means—

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: How can I say no to the Speaker?

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

The Speaker: And this is just for me, if I walked into the store and saw it. Should be item be behind the counter where we have to ask the pharmacist for it? Or, it's okay sitting on the shelf for anybody to pick it up?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: No. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And if we're speaking about the items that are—

The Speaker: Nicotine.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Nicotine, yes. They are meant to be behind the counter.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Behind the counter. And likewise for tobacco, you'll recall we made legislative amendments in 2015. (I think it was. I can't remember.) But when we dealt with restrictions of smoking. So, under the Tobacco [Control] Act there are restrictions insofar as it cannot be sold to under 18-year-olds, et cetera. And the advertising, you have to have a label of health warnings and so forth. But if it's a nicotine product, you have to go to the pharmacist and it's behind the counter and you say, *I want that*. Thank you.

The Speaker: So, if it is displayed out front, that's actually an offence to the law.

An Hon. Member: Ah.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: You mean out front by the till?

The Speaker: Yes, it is anywhere out front where anybody can just pick it up—

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Correct. Correct. Like in some establishments it is like I said, next to the chocolate bars.

The Speaker: The only reason I am asking is because like you, I have seen it in other establishments.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Absolutely. Absolutely. Thank you.

The Speaker: It is an offence when we see that.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That is correct. But first and foremost, the establishments that no doubt you're speaking about and I'm speaking about, are not even supposed to have it.

The Speaker: That's true too. Yes. Okay. Thank you for that.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: You have a question?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Okay. I thought you guys were finished. Okay. MP Cannonier has a question.

[Laughter]

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

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

And this is . . . just to preface it. This is for clarity because there are a lot of people who are confused right now. And just so that . . . I'm glad that the Minister has clarified that the Tobacco [Control] Act and the [Pharmacy and] Poisons Act . . . because I've done that this morning with several outlets. And I will declare my interest. I recognise that one of the service stations, not mine,—

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Yes. Let's make that very clear.

—was one of those who was in violation. So, my question is, They were given a letter to sign and unfortunately the owner of the establishment did not understand when he read the letter, because the be-

ginning of the letter says that no nicotine products . . . Where's my . . . where did I put my phone?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh. I wanted to read the statement so that it's clear. It says in the letter, *The Minister of Health provides this notice to remind retailers that under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act* . . . (And I guess have to declare my interest on both sides, the pharmacy as well, being general manager of the pharmacy before.) . . . *the sale of nicotine and nicotine products containing nicotine are prohibited.*

Now that's where the confusion came in. And so, I think we need to do an educational thing because the owner of the establishment . . . My question is . . . the owner of the establishment was confused because it said "nicotine" and he's just thinking, *Oh, well, cigarettes got nicotine. I can't sell cigarettes*. So, everybody went into a panic. The whole of Esso went into a panic. *We can't sell nicotine*. And there needs to be some clarity because the individuals who actually came to get the letter sent, I want to find out from the Minister, are they clear as well on the difference between the two Acts? Because it was obvious in the conversation that they were not.

The Speaker: All right. Minister, I opened a can of worms that time with my question.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: That's okay.

Mr. Speaker, I can't speak to who . . . all the details concerning this. But yes, there was a notice that has been . . . is being distributed to retail establishments. And insofar as the individuals who are serving the notice, which are persons who are part of Environmental Health because that's part of their remit, they also are fully aware of what the legislative requirements are and the difference and the distinction between the Tobacco [Control] Act and the Pharmacy and Poisons Act.

So, I don't know the circumstances in which the Honourable Member is speaking to, who delivered the letter [or] what was discussed, but recognising that the Director of Environment and conversations with him as recently as this morning and last evening concerning this matter that his officers are fully aware of the distinctions. And they are simply just serving the letter. But what I might add is that, again, part of what was revealed during the Ministerial Statement is that we will continue the dialogue with the Chamber of Commerce retail division, as well as other retail in the circuit so that they can ensure that they are compliant with the law. Right? Because everybody wants to be compliant with the law. So, we just want to ensure that and make sure that that information is passed on accordingly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Not opening up a can of worms but at the end of the day, if you are not a pharmacy, you shouldn't have it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Nicotine, correct.

The Speaker: End of story.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Correct. Correct.

The Speaker: End of story.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Because what the Honourable Member failed to continue reading is . . . and it goes on to say: *The sale of nicotine products containing nicotine . . . outside of a pharmacy.* Those four words are in the letter which unfortunately were not read out. But in any event, you are correct. You are absolutely correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: If you are not a pharmacy, it should not be in your store.

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

The Speaker: And that's for the listening audience to hear and understand, hopefully.

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Members.

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

The Speaker: MP King, do you have a question for the Minister as well or your answers . . . you got your answers from the dialogue already?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Good morning again.

The Speaker: Member MP King also has a question for you.

QUESTION 1: PUBLIC HEALTH RISK OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Mr. Robert King: Good morning to the House again.

Minister, do you have any stats on the number of prosecutions for establishments that have been selling nicotine products to underage persons?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I do not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary or are you done? One more?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: The information regarding the sale and distribution of vapes and nicotine products to young persons, where did that information come from that would require a change in the law or an amendment to the law? Sorry.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated we are not changing the law. This law is decades old. Insofar as the sale and distribution, we can say that this is occurring. Mr. Speaker, insofar as the data, I don't have the data. But nonetheless we are seeing it. I see it almost regularly walking across my office on Church Street, seeing young children smoking vapes. So, we know it's happening.

It is . . . the absence of any data I think in this particular scenario is somewhat offensive. We know it is happening. It is all about a matter of public health. And when . . . if prosecutions happen, and I'm sure the Honourable Member would know that I would not be entitled to the information about prosecutions. That is a different department. But in any event, this is about public health and public safety.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Second supplementary or second question?

QUESTION 2: PUBLIC HEALTH RISK OF NICOTINE-CONTAINING PRODUCTS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Mr. Robert King: Second question. I take offence to asking for stats that will guide policy being seen as an offensive question. I've got a problem with that in principle, understanding that the purpose of the legislation and enforcement is to protect the community. So, question.

The Speaker: Yes, put your question.

Mr. Robert King: What is the Ministry of Health doing to address vape use in high schools in terms of a campaign? I know we had the anti-violence campaign that was done in the various schools. I'm just wondering what initiative the Ministry of Health is doing regarding anti-vaping in schools because we know in the private and public schools that's an issue as well. Thank you.

The Speaker: Remember the question should be related to the Statement, and I don't think—

Mr. Robert King: No, no, no. It's related to the Statement in terms of the overarching policy is to protect those young persons from the use, borrowing what the other kids had done in the high schools to address that issue, I'm wondering as part of the National Strategy whether or not that was a consideration with the improved and increased enforcement of the law. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I can speak on behalf of the Ministry of Health. We have started a public awareness campaign as it relates to this. And that will continue as part of our remit with respect to public health. Insofar as what is happening in the Ministry of Education concerning this particular matter, I would invite the Honourable Member to speak directly to the Minister.

The Speaker: Okay. The Minister is saying that the door is open for a conversation with the Minister. Okay? Thank you.

No further questions for that Statement.

Members, the next Statement that has questions is the Statement from the Minister of Home Affairs. MP Fahy would like to put questions to you, Minister.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA'S COST OF LIVING: 2025 COST OF LIVING SUMMIT

Hon. Michael Fahy: Mr. Speaker, as you said, it's in relation to—

An Hon. Member: I don't think your microphone is on.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Oh, sorry. It is on. Let me just get a little closer to it. I'm a little tall.

Minister, in terms of your presentation, what would you say is the number one take-away solution from the Cost of Living Summit in terms of lowering the cost of living for Bermudians? Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recognising that the Cost of Living Summit was in response to what the various pillars of the public and business owners told us was important to them and what was impacting costs on the shelves or cost to their business, each sector had their own respective learnings. So, I invite the Member to perhaps specify

a panel. I know he was in attendance and maybe one in particular stood out that he wanted me to opine on.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. Supplementary then.

The Speaker: Yes, supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Would the Minister at least agree that there was a common theme across every single panel that one of the ways to reduce the cost of living is to increase the economies of scale across all sectors for the purposes of purchasing power? Would the Minister agree to that statement?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. And I wouldn't say that I would agree that each of the panels concluded that that was the solution. But as part of the discussion, as part of the intent of the Cost of Living Summit, options were explored using industry professionals and stakeholders to unpack some of the provisions associated with it. But I would invite the Member to direct questions relating to the Ministry of Economy and Labour as appropriate to further address these particular concerns.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead. Second supplementary.

Hon. Michael Fahy: In the first instance, just to make it clear. It certainly was not the conclusion; it was just a common theme certainly as I was in attendance that economies of scale were important. With that in mind, does the Minister accept that is important to try and bring as many people into Bermuda and Bermudians to return to increase those economies of scale?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, thank you. And I invite the Honourable Member similarly to . . . I guess, revisit the discussions because that was not the conclusion nor the statement that I left, nor the feedback that was collated, or the notes of the scores of individuals who attended.

I think what happened in the Cost of Living Summit and the various industry panel discussions that took place were a litany of discussions, contributions, considerations that could solve cost in Bermuda. I think the fact that we are a small . . . our economy is declining to some degree, did not mean that we must as an absolute conclusion increase population. I think we explored a number of solutions. And so, I'm not sure exactly what the Honourable Member would like me to respond to.

The Speaker: Second question?

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA'S COST OF LIVING: 2025 COST OF LIVING SUMMIT

Hon. Michael Fahy: Second question, thank you.

Madam Minister, based on that remark and some of the others, what do you believe was the main actionable strategy then on saving energy costs? We are going to talk about specific panels.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The panel discussion, as the Honourable Member who was there from the beginning until the end [knows], unpacked a number of options for the energy sector recognising that the regulator is the individual who . . . or the entity that supports any sort of policy considerations the Government may draft. A number of options were explored regarding how we might on behalf of the consumers lower energy costs. And so, there isn't one that I would leave or suggest to be more important or be the solution for energy costs. It is going to be a collaboration of both industry stakeholders, the public, as part of the solution to lower energy costs.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or third question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, the Minister would not agree that increasing the number of people in Bermuda would save on energy costs or not?

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Wow.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that population was a part of my Ministerial Statement. I think we talked about the Cost of Living Summit and the various solutions and cross-sector collaboration was the spirit and also the emphasis of the Statement. Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary or third question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA'S COST OF LIVING: 2025 COST OF LIVING SUMMIT

Hon. Michael Fahy: Mr. Speaker, what was the cost to the Bermuda taxpayer of the summit this week?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'll refer the Honourable Member to the Statement which included the report that is forthcoming including all costs. Thank you.

The Speaker: That piece will come at a later Statement. Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: [The Minister] has indicated it will come at a later date.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Surely everyone . . . anyway . . . I'm not going to go there. Mr. Speaker, so does the Minister have an idea of how much money was spent for the purposes of the cost of the summit? I mean, that's basic. Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'll invite the Honourable Member to read or refer to the statement as mentioned earlier. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Fahy: No more questions, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Members, that brings us to a close of the questions for Statements this morning.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Before we move on, I would just like to acknowledge in the Gallery that we have Senator . . . Wilkerson—I wanted to call you by your first name that time. My apologies. Senator [the Honourable Kim] Wilkerson [is] visiting with us this morning. Thank you for gracing us with your presence. Thank you.

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

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

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

MP Swan, I think you were on your feet first. You have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I ask this House . . . and [would] like my St. George's colleagues [MP] Ming and [MP] Foggo to be associated with the condolences for Mr. Ivan "Bootsie" Smith, a constituent of mine but who grew up in [constituency] 1. A St. Georgian through and through. Former secretary of St. George's Cricket Club. A PLP candidate in 1976 and a long-serving member of the Public Services Vehicle Licencing Board and a tourism ambassador in the transportation industry. A very colourful gentleman indeed and served Bermuda very well in that capacity. And I associate the Honourable Whip with that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, condolences . . . I attended last week a memorial service for Ms. Dorothy Chin Brandt, in Manhattan at The Explorers Club. [She was a] 30-year repeat visitor to Bermuda. One of my golf clients who became a very close family friend. And I was honoured to provide a tribute on behalf of all Bermudians that she came in contact with, a country she loved. And she was a politician. The first Asian elected in New York State. She was a pioneer in the Asian community. A very close friend of Mayor, the late David Dinkins who was her mentor and a dear friend of mine, dare I say.

And on a much happier note, I would like congratulations to be expressed and sent to one of our own in this Chamber, Sergeant-at-Arms Mr. Arnold Allen who was overseas representing Bermuda as a member of the Bermuda Karate Federation. I associate the whole House.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That team did well. Mr. Allen continues to even compete. He competed. But on the podium was a [Zoe] Talbot in the Under-10 division, third place. Chan Simons, second place in the Under-10 and Talia Fox first in the Over-40 category serving Bermuda. Representing the Bermuda Karate Federation team against USA, Chile, The Bahamas, Trinidad, Haiti, [and the] Dominican Republic. They did very, very well and congratulations to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. And we did acknowledge that the Sergeant-at-Arms was off the Island last week for the tournament, but thanks for giving the results and update.

MP Ming, you were on your feet next.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You jumped up quick.

An Hon. Member: That is the way it is going to be in Cup Match—2 to 1.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You know why they are going to jump up quick? Because they are going to be bowled out so quickly. They will be in and out real quick.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Yes, yes. We acknowledge that.

[Desk thumping]

An Hon. Member: Oh, boy. They are getting . . ..

The Speaker: MP Ming.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Would you like to—

[Crosstalk]

Mrs. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

Mrs. Renee Ming: I hope I get back my whole 20 seconds for that nonsense Somerset talk that's going on around this House today.

[Laughter]

Mrs. Renee Ming: But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all say, and I'm sure the House would want to be associated with this. Happy special person birthday to our own Deputy Speaker MP Lovitta Foggo.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

[Desk thumping]

Mrs. Renee Ming: I say *special person.* I don't want to get in trouble with any PIPA rules or anything, but you figure out who gets special person cards these days.

[Laughter]

Mrs. Renee Ming: And then you can figure out the age. Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I don't know what she's talking about.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Yes, free bus and ferry.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Aah!

Mrs. Renee Ming: Yes, we wish her all the best and many more.

Mr. Speaker, this past Wednesday we celebrated the Dame Jennifer [M.] Smith Future Leader Award Ceremony in constituency 1. I'm associating MP Foggo with that and MP Swan.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mrs. Renee Ming: The entire House.

And what we did was this is . . . this was our 20th year. So, I have stood in this House on my feet as long as I've been here to talk about this event. And it is . . . what we do is we honour young people who have demonstrated early leadership skills. So even if they're not the most academic, the most athletic, they have shown their school principals and their teachers that they are leaders at a young age. And so, it was awesome for us to be able to say that this has been . . . we started it in 2006 in constituency 1 and today in 2025, we are still holding this event, still recognising, honouring and celebrating our awesome young people. Because if you had the bios, Mr. Speaker, of some of these young people . . .

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Amazing. I just want to call out their names because it's important that we honour and recognise. So, from St. George's Preparatory School we had Sahaile Anderson *[sic]* and—

An Hon. Member: What?

Mrs. Renee Ming: —Bella Rodriguez, from East End Primary School—actually, let me say that correctly. Sahaile Anderson Outerbridge. From East End Primary School we had Jaze Anderson and Dominic Sewell. From St. David's Primary School we had Russian Thompson and Taya Fox.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't . . . I wouldn't even have the time to be able to read the bios here, but these are some awesome young people doing some awesome things. One is a "kidpreneur." She has her own website, ShopsSewMe.com. If you want to go in there and have a look and buy something.

I would also like to thank the village that helps me to put this event on. It's nothing I could do by myself. And just one phone call and I can have people just come right on board. And for that I am appreciative and recognise how blessed I am. So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Continue to honour and celebrate our young people because they need us.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

The next up this morning would be the Minister in front of you here.

Minister Weeks, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to be associated with the remarks first of all with the colleague who now has a senior . . . senior—

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —special card that she has.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: And I had to take the opportunity. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not there yet so I have to respect my elders.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: But I also, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring some congratulations to the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Darrin Simons on his recent appointment as President of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police, the Commissioners of Police in the Caribbean area for the 2025/26 term. His election to this regional leadership role is a testament to the respect he commands among his peers and their confidence in his vision for modern collaborative policing across the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to bring congratulatory remarks to Mrs. Brenda Johnson. Those who have probably seen today's paper may have seen her on the front page. Mrs. Brenda Johnson retires today after 50 years of service to Bermuda as the traffic records manager of the Bermuda Police Service. So, I would like to congratulate her, and the whole House hopefully, in her next stage of her endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the dedicated men and women of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service for their ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. Just last week, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of visiting the Elizabeth Hills seniors' residence on Happy Valley Road, where I witnessed first-hand the Bermuda Fire [and Rescue Service] commitment [to] outreach in action. As part of their fire prevention programme members of the [Fire] Service installed smoke detectors in the houses of approximately 15 senior residents. And I, Mr. Speaker, didn't just go there to witness it, I participated in, you know, visiting with the seniors and making sure that we were putting up the smoke alarms. So, hats off to the Chief Fire Officer Mr. Dana Lovell and his team for their commitment to doing their part in helping Bermuda to stay safe, especially our seniors, Mr. Speaker.

And as I take my seat, I think I want to be associated with the congratulatory remarks for the King Certificate and Badge of Honour Long Service Awards. I was there, but I was not here last week to show my appreciation, so I want to be associated with that.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The special . . . what do they call it? The special group?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The special person. The special person has the floor now.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Mr. Speaker, I'm always special.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Oh, that's right. That's right. Now she likes that. See that?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: So, Mr. Speaker, I rise to give congratulations to both East End Primary and St. David's Primary graduations. The Member from constituency 1 spoke about a leadership celebration just yesterday. But I can say when I will witness to our young people who are graduating out of primary school indeed, we have a whole host of potential leaders who are developing the skill set which will in the future put us in good hands. And I'd like to associate both the Member from constituency 1 and the Member from constituency 2 with these congratulatory remarks. And I—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Someone said the whole House?

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: No?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I did not . . . I did not attend St. George's [Preparatory] graduation.

An Hon. Member: Oh, okay.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I can only speak to the events that I attended.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, thank you.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do want to be associated with the remarks for Mr. Bootsie Smith who was a well-known St. Georgian and indeed an ambassador *par excellence*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam.

Minister, it looks like you are the only one rising right now. You have the floor, Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, yes, yes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like for the entire House to be to be associated with congratulations to all of our graduates that have come through.

An Hon. Member: Yes. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I'd like . . . normally I don't pick out anyone in particular but it was especially rewarding to see the Year 8 students transition from Francis Patton Primary school and Purvis Primary School this year, so double congratulations to them as they went through expecting to leave after P6 but ended up staying and leaving after P8.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to have a heartfelt congratulations sent to Dr. Bertram “Bert” McPhee who turned 99 on Saturday.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes. Yes.

Some Hon. Members: Wow.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, for some of our younger Members in the House, Dr. Bert, Dr. McPhee, arrived in Bermuda at a time when Black doctors were not openly welcomed. Yet, he rolled up his sleeves and served those who had nowhere else to turn. There are some people . . . there are a lot of people walking around here today, grandparents, parents perhaps even some people in this House who were born at the hands of Dr. McPhee at a time when White physicians would not see Black families.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Dr. McPhee is a member of my fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, and has been a member since 1946. That is 79 years of brotherhood. His stories are legendary. One of his favourites, which he spoke about again this weekend when I visited him, was his attendance at the fraternity's 50th anniversary in 1956 where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the keynote speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Imagine this. A man who not only practiced medicine at a time of racial resistance but sat in the same room as one of history's most remarkable voices spoke against that very type of discrimination. I've known him as a fraternity brother for nearly 24 years, and I've learned so much from him. He is the kind of man who will meet someone and say, *Oh, I remember when you were born.* And he would not be joking. So, Mr. Speaker, Dr. McPhee is a living, breathing archive of service, struggle and triumph. And we don't get many like him. So, on behalf of this House, and I would like to associate the entire House,—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —and with deep gratitude wish Dr. McPhee a happy 99th birthday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The Opposition Whip rose pretty quickly . . . the Government Whip, rather, rose pretty quickly that time.

Government Whip, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to highlight and also congratulate a much-needed service in this community in the likes of what's called the DailyMale, M-A-L-E. They provide a health clinic, a mobile health clinic offering free screenings for prostate cancer. And their mission—if you don't mind, I will read it out, Mr. Speaker. As I said, I'm trying to highlight it deliberately. It is, “To establish a community-led health charity for men in Bermuda to understand the importance of early detection and prevention of these diseases, and to provide them with the resources they need to make informed decisions about their health.”

Mr. Speaker, I actually attended one of their sessions a couple of weeks ago because they tend to move around the Island to various clubs and organisations where men . . . congregate, especially men who look like me who are most likely to need this service. Anyway, I just certainly want to congratulate them for their efforts and what they're doing and wish them all the best going forward. And I hope the message has been sent that every man should actually try to attend one of these screenings as well.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I want to send congratulations to a very good friend of mine who was ordained in the Anglican Church on Wednesday of last week. He's now the Reverend Terry Hassell. And I want to associate a couple of my colleagues who actually attended there as well, and the Minister of Sport who I am sure knows him as well. And I know Terry from way back. He has a big heart, a big-hearted person. And I think he will actually do well in the ministry. He has shown his stripes already, so I certainly want to congratulate him and wish him all the best. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Simmons. The East End is jumping up quite a bit down there. But he is a West End fellow—

Hon. Jarion Richardson: There you go.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Good morning, everyone.

The Speaker: He wears red and blue.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: You see I've got my purple on, so it is red and blue together.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute on the passing of Mr. George Courtney who was a very strong advocate and supporter of the Progressive Labour Party, the Deputy Leader of the party. Zane De Silva is also wishing to be associated as well as Minister Tinee Furbert, and I will say everybody from the Progressive Labour Party side.

Mr. Courtney, I first became familiar with him before I was an MP when he was very active on Facebook. He seemed to enjoy tormenting the OBA and their supporters. But I really got to know him when he became a constituent of mine a couple of years ago when he moved to Packwood Home. [He was] a strong advocate for the party, strong advocate for Black economic empowerment. And it is sad to see him go because I will miss our conversations.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Condolences to his mother, Sylvia—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: —and Honourable Kim Swan tells me he went to Dalton [E.] Tucker [Primary School] too.

The Speaker: Yes, yes he did.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: —but condolences to his mother, Sylvia, who actually just recently celebrated her 95th birthday, and to his siblings and all who loved him and will miss him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would any other Member . . . MP Lister. You have your three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to first start off, Mr. Speaker, by echoing the sentiments spoken by the Minister of Digitisation (if I am correct) in congratulating all of the recent graduates from the public school system whether they be primary school, middle school or high school. And I would just like to . . . I'm not going to name them but just to the many numerous young cousins and relatives that I have. I just want to send them congratulations as they finish one phase of education, and as they continue on to the next phase.

Mr. Speaker, I would also just like to highlight and send congratulations to the Bermuda swim team . . . I know I should probably associate the swimming coach, MP Ben Smith. [The Bermuda swim team] recently competed at the Planet Swim Summer Championships in Florida. And I just want to highlight a few of the participants: young Caleb Ingham finished with two silver medals; young Brian Desmond [finished with] two bronze medals; and young Jorgia White set a new national record in the 1500 metres freestyle with 19 minutes and 25.7 seconds. So, Mr. Speaker, our young people are always excelling, and I would just like to recognise them.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday I had the privilege of attending the "Hurt People, Hurt People" event put on at Bermuda College by the One Bermuda Ummah. The discussion was about . . . in relation to a lot of the violence that we have going on on the Island and how we can address it and different solutions. And also, the Minister of National Security, he was in attendance. So I would like to associate him. But it was a well-attended event, and I think we need more events like them. I know the Minister mentioned earlier the youth one that was put on that week, that same week also, but we need more so that we can again address the problems of violence in our community, find solutions, and that we can have a better way forward. So again, to the One Bermuda Ummah, congratulations on an event that was well-attended and hopefully we can use more of them to find a solution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Darrell, you rose really quickly that time. You can have the floor.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if this was done in this place before but if it was, I'm going to do it again. I'd like to send condo-

lences to the family of Ms. Yvette Lynn (Baxter) Wilson. She was a constituent of mine in constituency 15. [I] did not get to meet her personally because by the end she had moved to Paget, a location that we have in Paget, the King Edward Memorial [Hospital]. But I would like to send condolences to her family, especially—and I'll associate Minister Weeks with this—her daughter, Ms. Natalie Simmons and her husband Rodney Simmons, who do still live in constituency 15 as well as her other daughter, Ms. Linda Baxter. So, I would like to send condolences to the Baxter family.

Also, I would like to send congratulations, Mr. Speaker, to a few individual graduates and I know the Minister from the Cabinet Office did, and others have talked about graduates throughout the Island, but I want to highlight a few in particular. And as we all know because we sit in this place, Mr. Speaker, that when election time comes we all ask for assistance from multiple different people and I'd like to congratulate these specific young people who answered the call to step up and assist and learn during the most recent General Election, particularly with my campaign. So, I am forever indebted and grateful to them. But I would like to call their names.

Congratulations to Ms. Ciana Smith who at the time of the election was my youngest voter. Ciana graduated from The Berkeley Institute yesterday. Also, Ms. Mahy Straw who graduated from The Berkeley Institute. Ms. Ra'eesah Robinson who graduated yesterday from The Berkeley Institute. Ms. Tayla Bean who graduated from The Berkeley Institute yesterday. And this one here, Ms. Alay Burgess, who we will be hearing more from because yesterday at the graduation she picked up many scholarships. She was an S3 student, Mr. Speaker, who graduated a year early from The Berkeley Institute and I want to just specifically, as I said, Mr. Speaker, say thank you to these young people because they could have sat by and they could have watched it all happen back in the run up to the election but they decided to step forward. They decided to assist and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, they did say at the end of the exercise that they learned quite a bit. And I wish them well in their future endeavours and maybe one day we may see a few of them here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP King. You have your three minutes.

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

I wish to extend condolences to the family of Ms. Kimberley Wilson of 91 North Shore who passed on June 18. [My] thoughts and prayers are with the family at this difficult time.

On a lighter note, I want to extend congratulations and praise to Ralph Scott, Jr., who is 17 years old, 6-foot 7 [inches], [and an] up and coming basketball player. You probably read about him in the papers. He is, you know, a tremendous young man, respectful, focused and has a really bright future in sports, and in general.

And I also want to commend and congratulate Ms. Marley Tear who shadowed me over the last week who is interested in a career in politics. She got to visit over at the Archives and see the tremendous work that they are doing there. Also, [I am] in the process of getting her set up with the Youth Parliament here through your son, sir. Thank you very much. Take care.

The Speaker: Would you like to take your three minutes, Minister Furbert?

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity as well to congratulate . . . I know it has already been mentioned but I do want to stand to my feet to congratulate all the persons who have graduated from our primary and middle school and high school programmes. But I do want to make special mention to the graduates of Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy. I will associate the whole House and Minister Caesar (who sits in another place) with these remarks.

And you may have seen in the media, Mr. Dylan Peart who graduated while he was overseas because he could not be here to participate in the graduation ceremony. So, I want to send a big congratulations to him, but all the graduates of the Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy who will go on to do other programmes within the Government system or maybe other sorts of interests that they may have.

I want to also take the opportunity . . . I had the opportunity to attend BEDC's Pitch Perfect Match. And, Mr. Speaker, it was very beautiful to see our people, our Bermudian people pitching their entrepreneurship and business ideas through this pitch competition. Our people are so motivated and inspired and inspiring when they come forth with their business ideas. And we want to thank BEDC for the opportunity that they give our people, not just young people.

But I want to say a special congratulations to Ms. Trina Seymour who won the $1,000 cash prize to go towards her business. And her business, or her product, was a Bermudian-inspired children's workbook that children can utilise throughout Bermuda. And she was, you know, . . . shared [she was] just so passionate about this workbook and I just hope that she gets all the support that she desires from our community.

Also Bermy Bouncers, Mr. Speaker, I had . . . I don't know if anyone had the opportunity to watch Bermuda's very own Bermy Bouncers. They are a skipping group. They will be representing Bermuda internationally I believe this summer. But the skill of those students . . . they made my heart stop at some points, how they were flipping and skipping with a great degree of skill and ability. So, I want to say a big

congratulations to Bermy Bouncers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member—MP Reverend Dill.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Good morning—

The Speaker: Good morning.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity this morning to rise and give congratulations to Mrs. Barbara Dillas. Recently there was a documentary that was aired in the Somerset community. The documentary was produced by Marcquedelle Phillips Rodriguez and assisted by Mrs. Barbara Dillas and former Member of Parliament the Honourable Dale Butler. The documentary is entitled "Bus Stop Mural: Legacy of Somerset" our business history.

And for those of you who may not be familiar there is a beautiful mural that has been painted on the bus stop across from the Warren Simmons [Community] Field in Somerset. And the documentary explains the mural and it includes various individuals from the Somerset community who are telling the history of the various institutions that are highlighted in that mural.

And I would just like to thank Mrs. Dillas for her hard work along with the other members of the team and to thank the individuals who have taken the time to share the history of our community. And I encourage everyone who can to get an opportunity to hear about the wonderful Somerset community especially as we prepare for our upcoming victory this summer.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you.

The Speaker: There you go. There you go.

[Desk thumping]

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

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

I first want to give condolences to the family of Mr. William "Billy" Gillies. I hesitate because he is, or he was a constituent, and whenever I would speak to him he had to correct me several times on the correct pronunciation of his name.

I would also like to extend condolences to the family of Mr. Lloyd Matthew. Mr. Matthew was my music teacher at Warwick Sec. [He] was a very kind man, somewhat very soft spoken, but he was very firm and fair in the many times that he had to tell me to shut up, or the many times I got kicked out of his class—on occasion.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: I'll stay focused, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to express condolences to members of my family on the passing of Aunt Eula, Aunt Eula Thomas. She will be interred later on next month. But again, just expressing condolences to Renée and Selena and the rest of the family.

I would like to express congratulations to Andre Lambe on claiming the ABO Regional Welterweight title.

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to associate the whole House if everybody is in agreement. And as well as congratulations to Bermuda's newest ophthalmologists Addon and Addi Teye-Botchway who graduated fairly recently from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. They both will be doing their residencies there as well. So, I just want to extend congratulations because they are constituents as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member—MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues and most of all good morning to the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start off with some condolences to some folks from Devonshire. I am going to start off with Ms. Lois Ann Perinchief of Happy Valley Road, constituency 14. The MP reached out to her family. Mr. Matthew Rodill, [Jr.] of Chaingate Hill. That's my constituency. He is actually of Saber descent.

And Mr. Jelani Tweed who would be the grandson of . . . for those who went into the Army, Colour Tweed. He passed away recently as well, unexpectedly. He was also the cousin of . . . well, Reverend Tweed.

Mr. Speaker, also congratulations to my godson, Szaine Williams and the class of CedarBridge. And I single him out, Mr. Speaker, because he's the grandson of one of our greatest leaders, the Honourable Ottiwell Simmons. He is the youngest grandson of Ottiwell Simmons.

Mr. Speaker, a couple weeks ago I was invited to come to CedarBridge to . . . I forgot exactly what the programme is called, but I was invited by a teacher to come there and listen to young persons give presentations and we grade them on their speaking directly to the audience, the flow of their presentation, so on and so forth. There were three young men, I won't call their names because they are underage

(like the privacy issues) but these three young men each gave succinct presentations. One was on gang violence in Bermuda, the root causes and what are the possible solutions. Another young man gave a presentation on housing for seniors and he gives the statistics and what are the possible solutions. And another young man gave a presentation on affordable housing. Again, what are some of the root causes and what are some of the possible solutions. So, I want to give a shout-out to the class of—even though I'm a Berkeleyite. I want to give a shout-out to the class of 2025 at CedarBridge for the presentations and their teacher, Mrs. Wolfe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.
Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to first associate myself with the congratulations to all of our recent graduates from university right on down. Mr. Speaker, I emphasise *right on down* because next week will be a graduation for a special four-year-old—

An Hon. Member: Aha!

Hon. Jache Adams: —who graduates from preschool and will soon be going to "big" school. And so, I certainly wanted to associate myself with that.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, who might that be, you might ask?
And also, I don't know if this was done previously, but also wanted to take the opportunity to congratulate a former colleague of ours, Senator Leslie Robinson, who was awarded with the—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: —I'm *late*? It happened already?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Oh, the *late* Senator, okay. The late Leslie Robinson who was awarded the 2025 Fred Reiss Lifetime Achievement Award for the Bermuda Captive Conference.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: Indeed, in her recognition, Mr. Speaker, we all know, and I firmly believe that the former Senator did not reach her full potential in her public life but her value and her contribution certainly in the captive space is well worth the recognition. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you.
Any other Member wish to make a contribution?
None.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as I will be the last one speaking today, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to rise to ask that a letter to be sent to the family of a constituent of mine who recently passed. His name is Mr. Dennis Leroy Woodley who passed away a week before last.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry? What happened?
The former chairman of constituency 18 for the Progressive Labor Party, Minister Michael Weeks, wishes to be associated with these condolences. But [Mr. Woodley] was the husband of Ms. Katina Woodley and father to Jaleela Woodley who is someone who is active in my particular constituency, Mr. Speaker. And I would just like to ask that a letter be sent to the family on his passing.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.
MP Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Yes, Mr. Speaker, my apologies. I recognise that the Premier has closed this particular part of the segment; however, I just wanted to rise and join Members of this House in sending certainly our condolences to [the family of] Mr. Lloyd Matthew who passed, the late Lloyd Matthew. He was a Member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; however, he transcended religion. And he certainly immersed himself throughout our community. [He] was seen as an organist and a great musician. He contributed to our community. He will be very much missed. And I do believe the Honourable Member spoke about it earlier and that was that he moved quietly throughout our community, touching everyone. But also showing us the love of music, the contribution of music, and the fact that it is an intricate part of our lives and he will be remembered for just that. So, on behalf of my family, on behalf of the House, and also from the Deputy Speaker, I certainly want to send his family our deepest condolences at this time. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. And I apologise to the Premier. He did finish the segment.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Members, there are no further speakers. Before we move on, I would just like to add my remarks to the condolences that were expressed to the Smith family on the passing of Mr. Smith, from St. George's

there. Even though he was a St. George's fellow, he was a good friend, and we always found it very interesting to talk about St. George's history when I was down there visiting with him.

And exactly to the comments by, in regard to Ms. Dillas and her efforts on making . . . doing the mural on the bus stop in Somerset, I would like to be associated with those as well and congratulate her on her efforts for continually giving back to the community in the Sandys Parish.

But with that said, we'll 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: There are three Bills to be introduced this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to introduce your Bill?

BILL

FIRST READING

LAND VALUATION AND TAX (SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND POSTPONEMENT OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT VALUATION LIST) ACT 2025

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

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 Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next two are in the name of the Minister for the Cabinet [Office].

Minister.

BILL

FIRST READINGS

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2025

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bills for their first reading so they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 and the Building Amendment Act 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The item to be dealt with today is the consideration of Tourism Investment (Clearwater Community Event Venue) Order 2025 in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I moved that consideration be given to the draft order entitled Tourism Investment (Clearwater Community Event Venue) Order 2025 proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for tourism with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (CLEARWATER COMMUNITY EVENT VENUE) ORDER 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, the purpose in bringing this Tourism Investment (Clearwater Community Event Venue) Order 2025 before this Honourable House is to enable the grant of customs duty relief to the operators of Clearwater Community Event Venue. The Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, in consultation with the Minister of Finance deems that this tourism project to be an attraction which is in the national economic interest of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to invite this Honourable House to take this Order under consideration. Mr. Speaker, the application for a Tourism Investment Order was submitted by Premier Tickets Limited (PTIX), a company founded by Bermudian Michael Branco and incorporated in Bermuda on 12 June 2024.

Mr. Speaker, PTIX partnered with 2.0 Collective to establish a community event at the Clearwater parking lot. The leadership team of PTIX includes Michael Branco, Chief Information Officer; Judy Benevides, Operations Manager; and Andrew Stoneham, Customer Care Manager. The leadership team of 2.0 Collective includes Polina Komsalova-[Branco] CEO; Alison Murdoch-Smith, Cient and Creative Services Manager; and Nathan Swan, Creative Lead.

Mr. Speaker, PTIX has signed a two-year lease with the Bermuda Land Development Company Limited for this parking lot site situated on Cooper's Island Road. PTIX plans to set up a permanent venue for use by the community and event promoters providing a cost-effective turnkey venue. They will install base infrastructure including a 5,000 foot tent power infrastructure and containerised bars and facilities.

Mr. Speaker, PTIX has a flexi team of up to 52 Bermudian employees and has the capacity to staff every role for every size event, large or small. This team includes event managers, parking attendants, box office staff and gate attendants. Local security companies will be hired to coordinate and manage local event attendees.

Mr. Speaker, on 28 March 2024, the 5,000 square foot tent, previously located at Pier Six in Hamilton, were set up in the main parking lot at Clearwater Beach, Cooper's Island Road. The open configuration accommodates large crowds, up to 800 people standing inside and outside of the tent. This tent can be dismantled within 30 minutes in the event of windstorms in excess of 45 mph.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will note that Premier Tickets Limited is seeking full relief from customs duty for a period not exceeding five years from the operative date of the Tourism Investment Order in respect of any equipment, goods and supplies which are necessary for the operation of the attraction.

Mr. Speaker, Michael Branco and his team at PTIX have every confidence, and I concur, that this venue will become a vibrant component of the East End of Bermuda, enhancing our tourism offerings while simultaneously providing economies to the event organisers at Clearwater Beach.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recommend this Order for support of this Honourable House. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Robinson.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to all of the folks listening in.

I just want to be really clear that the One Bermuda Alliance supports any sort of relief for the local economy and improving amenities for our tourism product, which is what this Bill is intended to do.

So, as the Minister was concise and to the point with it, I will also be that and say that we look forward to seeing more targeted relief to the local economy and infrastructure growth within the tourism industry. And this is a great start. So, he has my support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any other Member with to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you ever so much.

I am very much in support of this initiative, and I thank the Minister for his part in ensuring that it has come forward to this point. Just last weekend Mr. Speaker, I was in an indoor sporting facility purpose-built by [Robert Morris] University in Pittsburgh in which . . . it was very interesting because that university, a small private university, with 5,000 students who compete in Division One, has an outdoor dome and it houses a golf driving range. But when you're hitting off the mats, you look down there and you see the football pitch. And I . . . and it just dawned on me, because I said, *Boy, I want to go there around ten o'clock at night or nine o'clock and hit some balls* when I had the urge. And I couldn't. And I just realised the football pitch outline was for a purpose.

It was to be able to provide soccer playing for the university teams that compete indoors. And why indoors? Well, it gets kind of cold in Pittsburgh. But those teams practice year-round. And I got to thinking. I said, *You know what? In this country of Bermuda,*

the greatest opportunity in tourism exists between November 1 and May when less than 50 per cent occupancy contains . . . I hear people talking about growing the population. But I never hear them talking about growing the amount of population that comes to visit Bermuda between those months.

And a facility such as that, which is akin to what we're seeing happening out at Clearwater, it's the way in which we need to look as the type of amenities that would allow us to promote the time of year where the low-hanging fruit that doesn't require the greatest amount of infrastructure, it just causes us to find the thousands of people amongst the millions of people out there in the world who would choose to come to this wonderful country as they did hundreds of years ago. Because we once were a winter destination.

So, I'm very much supportive of this. It is certainly something that we can look to as a further example of the type of infrastructure that would benefit Bermuda greatly. And I'm ecstatic with the fact that the private sector entrepreneur spirit is recognising these opportunities.

And why do I say that? It is because everybody looks to the government to do everything. But the success in Bermuda tourism came about because we had a very vibrant private sector involvement in industry. And, you know, you saw it in guest houses and the like. Well, some of them are now condominiums. You saw them in small hotels which are now condominiums today. But what we see happening here with the amount of investment Orders that have come forward in recent years . . . I declare my interest. I used to present some before the Minister came to this Honourable House from the other place.

And I'm here to say that's because private industry is seeing the opportunity that's being realised through the success that's manifesting itself in this very country, in that very space. And so that is a good thing. And this is a good initiative. And I look to it to grow and encourage others to venture into where there is opportunity.

And I will close by saying this. The opportunity in Bermuda exists between November 1 and May, particularly because we have hotels that are 50 per cent undersold, or greater. And to me, that presents an opportunity, a great opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

MP Foggo, would you like to make a contribution?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be ever-so brief.

I feel duty-bound to speak on this because this tourism product is being situated right down there in constituency 3. More to that, this tourism product that will be placed down there in constituency 3, this event product will be offering 52 jobs to our Bermudians so we will have about 50-some Bermudians employed. But that doesn't speak to the attendant services that will be associated with events like this, things like security. So by ensuring that we have put this product in place, I think Bermuda will benefit from—and certainly Bermudians because we're talking about 52 jobs, we definitely, Mr. Speaker, can say that we are creating an atmosphere, a vibrancy that St. David's will be able to . . . the community of St. David's will be able to enjoy, will be able to benefit from, and we can say that we are promoting something that has been to the benefit of our people.

I have many, many constituents who email me every day because they, given the skill sets that they have, perhaps still have not secured employment. And I have referred them to various institutions that are offering services in the St. David's area. And no doubt I will be pointing them to this event that will be taking place, this entity that will be housed down there in St. David's.

I'm excited about the fact that we will have our —and I'm emphasising Bermudians, our Bermudians employed down there in the St. David's community. And so that should bring some added dollars to that specific area as well because we do have a few restaurants down there. We have the beaches down there and during the summer months, in particular, you will have a whole host of people down there who can benefit from the extra activity that will be taking place in the community of St. David's.

It would have been remiss of me not to point that out. And so, I'm grateful that we are introducing something that will see more Bermudians employed, in particular. And likely more than 52 people, because as I said, there are attendant services that are associated with events such as this. So, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you to the Tourism Minister. I know that is not just what he is responsible for, but we are talking about tourism right now. And I look forward to this being a welcomed entity in the community of St. David's.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Government Whip.

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

I wish to associate my support to this Order that the Minister of Tourism has actually brought forward. Let me declare my interest in the first instance and say that I am the Chairman of the BLMC, where Clearwater comes under. And when the idea was brought to our board, we certainly grabbed it with both hands because we have been trying to get some excitement going down in the East End anyway.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What about Cup Match?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Oh, yes, that too.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: And so, having brought this forward, I see this as nothing but a positive for all Bermuda especially the East End. So, thank you, Minister, for bringing this forward. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: MP Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: MP Scott Simmons, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill put forward by the Minister is good stuff. It speaks very much to our community, and we just want to rise and congratulate him and his department and also congratulate those who vetted the process, looked over this particular proposal and saw the value in it.

Mr. Speaker, this is also an important part of what we are doing as the Government, and this is good. This is something that we have to highlight. We are doing it. There were those who were wondering whether or not we are doing it, is that we are supporting entrepreneurs. We are . . . when they bring proposals of merit, the Ministers and the Government are looking over what they are doing and that they are approving it and backing it up, Mr. Speaker. Not just with the approval but also with the tax relief or with the duty relief and the continued duty relief. Because I do believe, and the Minister can correct me, is a five-year process. This is a reflection of this Government's focus on its community. A focus on how we can promote and move our community forward, encouraging entrepreneurs, and really making a difference in our community.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Simmons: And so, kudos certainly to the Minister and to the other members who are involved in this and our Government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other . . . Minister Lightbourne.

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

I too rise in support of this Tourism Order, recognising that our tourism industry is evolving and having heard and listened to some of the statistics that were provided at the recent Cost of Living Summit, what is important and what it underscores is the vision that the Government has had and the success of it because what we see is private sector innovating and in response to what we have created as a policy and legislative framework for them to do so.

And so, I stand in support of that. And I stand in support of those who will be employed and benefit from this tourism opportunity and also this venue space. Noting that we see in other islands how there are an uptick of venues and things in which events and the like can be held attracting tourists, attracting locals, and attracting those who may have interest and attend.

And so, I support this. I support the entrepreneurs who have thought this important to create. And I thank them for taking some of the heat from constituency 14, as it has been constantly used and the parking and the like, it is often the thing that the constituents of constituency 14 would like to discuss and also see if we can address. So, I think this venue down in the east is purposeful and it does support, not only our community, our environment, and also our tourism products. So, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does anyone else want to make a contribution?

Minister Darrell. Yes, close out.

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

And I want to just say thank you for the support that we have received for this Tourism Investment Order from both sides of the House which continues to show what the Government is doing as far as investment in tourism in this country. And as the MP from constituency 14 said, I am also, when it comes to our representative, in that same boat. As you know, the National Sports Centre has long been a useful venue similar to what we are talking about today. But to have a purpose-built venue down in a more suitable location will benefit everyone when it comes to the tourism products, the experiences that tourists will have, and locals alike. As well as, you know, support for the entrepreneurs who apply their trade in this space.

And I would just like to make one clarification for my colleague, the Deputy Speaker who mentioned 52 jobs. There are already 52 jobs that are in place from PTIX, who is going to put this community centre. So, what I think my colleague was saying, and the Deputy Speaker was saying, is that there will be possibly 52 additional jobs made.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, thank you for that. Thank you for that. And I'm happy to make that clarification for you—52 additional jobs with all other, you know, vendors who come and they are going to support this venue.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone who has supported this second of many-to-come attractions that come under the 2017 Tourism Investment Act.

And with that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to His Excellency the Governor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections. The matter has been [approved].

[Motion carried: The Tourism Investment (Clearwater Community Event Venue) Order 2025 was approved.]

The Speaker: Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker I move that the Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 11 July [2025.]

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

We have a Member who has risen to his feet to speak so . . . You have your 20 minutes, MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I will not need that 20 minutes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, a couple of months ago we looked at the definition of the term *revisionist.* Someone who attempts to recreate what happened years ago and spin it into their definition of what's happening now.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about in the last sitting about people who deny genocide. People who deny land theft. And the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, at least that I came to, is someone who has very little credibility. So, Mr. Speaker, we are going to talk today about a word called "gentrification." And the definition is defined as, *A process in which poor areas experience an influx of middle or wealthy individuals who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses often resulting in increased property values and the displacement of other residents*. Gentrification, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, we heard . . . , well, some read or heard an individual saying, *The solution to the cost of living is to bring in more people. The solution to the cost of living is to give away Bermudian status.*

Mr. Speaker, there's not one island where the population has increased that life has gotten cheaper for the residents. Not one island. Even if the volume of groceries comes in a little more and maybe, *maybe,* you will get that watermelon for $11.00 now. If the cost of housing has gone up exponentially, that $11.00 is wiped out. So, when people stand on their feet or get in front of the media and say the cost, the solution to the cost of living is to bring in more people or give away Bermuda status, we have to call it for what it is. A lack of credibility. Because they cannot show one iota of evidence where populations have gone up and the cost of living has gone down.

Mr. Speaker, supply and demand. As we all know, one of the biggest issues in Bermuda right now is affordable housing. It has always been an issue, but it's getting worse. We have an issue where Bermudians cannot afford to purchase property on their own Island. We are getting to a point now where Bermudians cannot even afford to rent in their own Island because the prices are just getting ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. The [Bermuda] Housing Corporation through Minister Burch, and now Minister De Silva, is doing what they can. But you cannot keep up with what's going on out there, Mr. Speaker.

We all have an issue where Bermudians are leaving because they can't afford to live in their own Island, Mr. Speaker. Even if you dropped the price of groceries and if someone cannot afford to pay rent, they are leaving. What is the sense of having groceries if you ain't got anywhere to live, Mr. Speaker?

So, when we hear people purporting that they are here to help the country, saying, *Let's just give away Bermuda status,* again, it goes to the word "credibility," Mr. Speaker. Because, let's think about it, how does giving status to people who are already here increase the actual economic activity? It doesn't.

But what it does do, Mr. Speaker . . . let me read a quote out of *The Royal Gazette*. "Attracting foreigners to the island to boost the population was the obvious solution." Again, another quote, Mr. Speaker. The granting of—this is *The Royal Gazette* [27 June 2025], not my words. "The granting of Bermudian status to foreign nationals would mean them gaining unrestricted property ownership rights. . . ."

Mr. Speaker, when you now give status to people, they now have the ability to purchase unlimited amounts of property. They could buy apartments. They can kick the tenants out. They can do whatever. They now have the same rights as you and I, Mr. Speaker.

So, I'm going to leave this with the listening audience and both sides of the House. I want a show of hands from anyone who believes granting status to foreigners is going to lower the cost of living. Anyone?

Anyone?

No one?

I want to ask for a show of hands if there is anyone in this House who believes that granting sta-

tus to foreigners is going to lower the cost of housing. Is it going to help Bermudians?

Anyone?

No one?

Mr. Speaker, as we continue this dialogue of definitions—revisionists, genocide, and gentrification—let us remember, someone who says these things has no credibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

I'm going to take MP Smith over here on the side. MP Smith.

COST OF LIVING SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

I did attend the Cost of Living Summit and I have to say, my take away was [that] one of the major components to a solution would be to increase the number of people on the Island so that we are splitting the costs. And that did come up repeatedly in the discussions and the panel discussions. For instance, you know, the more containers on a ship the less it costs to bring the ship in. The economies of scale that you get when you order more groceries.

On the energy piece, the comment was made that the electrical system has been or had been designed for a population of 70,000 and of course the Chamber of Commerce is estimating we are somewhere between 55[,000] and 57[,000]. So, you know people do matter. But it is really important about how we go about growing the population.

One of the interesting statistics that came up during the course of the Summit was that somebody said that 30 per cent of our population is living in poverty. And you know we have heard that kind of thing before but that is absolutely stunning.

The other thing that was mentioned was that in the past 17 years (from 2008 to today), the volume of imports that would be, you know, goods coming across the dock, is 26 per cent less than it was in 2008. And that even during the time when there was a blip up in the number of imports coming in because of the America's Cup, we were still 16 per cent below where we were in 2008. You know, these are data points that do tell a story. And numbers do matter.

One of the things that was also interesting was some of the recommendations and suggestions that were made which are not major ticket items but there are areas where the community and government can come together to solve some of the problems that we have, and when we can do that incrementally, obviously, that kind of moves the lever in the right direction.

And one of them was . . . it came from the farmers who basically said that they are losing a lot of valuable crops due to the feral chickens. And that if we could do something about the chickens, that would be of benefit to them. And that there are also some health issues with respect to the number of feral chickens that we have. I think that we could probably get some sort of government community effort around that, and that is something that could probably happen fairly quickly and then we are just into a maintenance programme.

So, I do think that there were some . . . there was (no pun intended) but some low-hanging fruit in terms of some of the recommendations that were made. I think it was a really good event in that it pointed everybody up in the direction of—this is a crisis. How we solve the crisis, I think is, like I said, going to be incremental. But I also do believe that it involves growing the population. But I don't believe it is giving away status, opening the floodgates, doing any of that.

I think that I would like to see a very structured strategy and plan to grow our population in the immediate term, but with a view on medium- to long-term and sustainability of our culture and our people going forward. It is not something that . . . we didn't get here overnight, and we are not going to solve it overnight. But I think that really there needs to be a really cohesive and coordinated plan to say, *What are we going to look like 10 years from now?* And, *Are we going to be around 10 years from now?* i.e., Are we going to be able to afford to live here 10 years from now? Or are we going to be part of the emigration boat?

Anyhow, I commend the Ministry on putting together the Summit. And I hope that there are further discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Smith.

MP Simmons.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes on the clock.

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: I will not speak ill of the Member because he is not here. But I would like to thank the Member who just took her seat for saying that she does not support the granting of status.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: And I think it's a very clear thing because that's not the policy of her party. So, I hope that she will as a new voice influence and shape the direction to pull back from this position which they have held since 2012.

Mr. Speaker, those of us—

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Linda Smith: I would like to make a point of order.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What's your point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: I did not say—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: —I disagree with granting of status. What I absolutely disagree with is opening the floodgates and granting status to people to build up the population. We have to put a plan around this. Okay? And it doesn't . . . it is not . . . it's not—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: —It is not one alignment.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: Where's the plan? Where's the plan?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So, let's be clear. Let's be clear.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: She doesn't want to open the immigration floodgates but wants to give away status.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So, let's be clear. Your position is not the same as ours. We don't have to explain our position because our position is not the same as yours. You have to justify your position of granting status to whoever and wherever. And let me understand. Let me make something very clear.

An Hon. Member: Qualify.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: One of the things—

Ms. Linda Smith: Point of clarification.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: No, I'm not taking it.

The Speaker: He is not taking it.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: One of the things that disturbed me about the One Bermuda Alliance since their defeat in 2017, you made policy decisions without consultation that were not in your platform which led to the people blocking Parliament. Right? The largest protests since the 1970s. And never once have you said, *You know what? I'm sorry. You know what? Maybe I should listen to the people I work for who have told [me] unequivocally, unreservedly we do not support the granting of status*.

Listen up. Listen clear. Look—some people, and I don't want to pick on slow learners, but some people if they don't listen, they feel.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So the licks weren't enough in 2016? The licks at the polls in 2017 wasn't enough? The licks in 2020 wasn't enough?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: You think you know better than the people we work for. They don't want it. They've told you they don't want it. You know why they don't want it? I had an interesting book I found in a thrift shop recently on Bermuda's history. *The People of Bermuda. Beyond the Crossroads*. And there was an interesting factoid in this book. When the seats were cut for 40 [MPs] back during the constitutional conference, 60 per cent of the seats were predominantly White.

And do you know how they got there? Well, we can talk about the way the boundaries are cut and all that. The rapid influx of deliberate manipulation of immigration by the powers that be to shape the political landscape and economic landscape of Bermuda.

An Hon. Member: Read your history.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: It's a fact.

An Hon. Member: Read your history.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Okay. This is the history we have experienced. So, when we speak, we are not speaking [about] some bogey-man we have never of. We have seen this movie before. And we have seen the same players involved with this movie before. You cannot put out a remake saying the same script and the same nonsense that we have had to put up with—

An Hon. Member: Same scriptwriters.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Same scriptwriters.

Now, when I came to this House, I did not come here to speak for real estate agents who cannot sell houses because they are overpriced. I did not come here for retailers who were complaining about the market not being big enough for them to exploit. I came here because I saw what my contemporaries

saw, how so many of us had to train lesser qualified expatriates to be our bosses.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: To sit in a department where every single Bermudian in the department is more qualified than the person they brought in on a work permit. We have had to sit and see the job descriptions manipulated. We have had to see people inside businesses being told, *Oh, do not apply for that job because we like you where you are.* So they can bring in one of their friends.

We have seen the games played with immigration. We have seen it. And so, we need to have an honest conversation about growing the country. And I agree that as we grow it has to be sustainable. We have to be able to look at the . . . have as much passion to bringing our people who are born here and lived here all their lives and were forced to be displaced because of the economy home, as you do for bringing in new people. You listen to the releases by the One Bermuda Alliance. Go back and count them. How many releases have you put out? How many interviews? How many statements saying we want to bring people back? And compare it to all the talk about getting status.

Priorities matter. And Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you something right now. I was not elected by people who want status. I was not elected by people who want to see Bermudians discriminated and displaced. And I pledge to my constituents, the people who voted for me, I will never support it. And I will fight it. Whether we are Government, Opposition or whatever. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

Mr. Robert King: I feel compelled to Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Are you cleaning up?

Mr. Robert King: Well, remember who is the current Administration who has created that mess.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mr. Robert King: When we are looking at the mass exodus of persons leaving Bermuda, you won the election way back in 2017 until this day,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: —more people in the ground, increased—

The Speaker: Members, let him have his say.

Members!

Mr. Robert King: —knife and gun crime—that lays at your feet.

People leaving this country because of the cost of living, you created that. And also, when you are talking about persons who are working for the Bermuda Government and foreigners . . . when we are looking at professional services and consultants, how many millions of dollars are being spent on consultants under the current Administration?

We ask for the numbers, but I am sure that will not be provided. When we were discussing the budget, what we saw is that there was an overreliance on professional consultants at the expense of training local Bermudians.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member, as every single time he gets on his feet in this House, is misleading the House. I will point the Honourable Member to the Budget Book which lists precisely what the Honourable Member just asked.

The Speaker: Continue Member. Just be mindful of the comments.

Mr. Robert King: Well, he makes, the Honourable Premier, makes the point. Professional services verses training for persons in various departments. Professional consultants, monies for that, millions and millions of dollars. Training budget, hundreds of thousands of dollars. So, there is a difference, and we also see—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He knows full well that the training budget for the Government of Bermuda, as stated in the Budget Statement, is not hundreds of thousands of dollars. He must retract that statement and speak facts in this House.

An Hon. Member: He doesn't know because he can't read.

The Speaker: Member, just be mindful—

Mr. Robert King: He does know, and he can read.

The Speaker: Member, just be mindful of the fact—

Mr. Robert King: —No, no.—

The Speaker: —that we just came out of a Budget Statement—

Mr. Robert King: Absolutely, absolutely.

The Speaker: The Budget Statement would have all the numbers that are factual. Continue.

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

The fact is that statements are being made about floodgates and immigration—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Robert King: —which are attributed only to the One Bermuda Alliance, because it is convenient. However, when you have the Chamber of Commerce which has used data and analysis from all sources to include Government's figures, the message is clear that the population needs to increase. It needs to be strategic as my colleague said here. Not a floodgate approach.

However, it could be argued that if we are in a state of crisis something other than what is being done now needs to happen because people are still leaving. The cost of living is still increasing. People are still dying based on the policies that are implemented right now. So, what is being done now is not working.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: The point is we need to do things differently.

When we ask for data and what is driving the policy decisions that are being made in this country, we are basically told, *We will get to that*. Or, *I do not have the numbers on that*. So, we are making decisions based on how we think people feel. We know how people feel.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Well, good—

The Speaker: Let the Member speak.

Mr. Robert King: —good because I am representing the people—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: —Let the Member speak.—

Mr. Robert King: —of constituency 10 and they feel like this. They have talked about this, the ones that still remain.

If we are serious about making change, what we will accept is that the Opposition's role is to uphold the Government and hold it accountable to do what is in the best interests of the country. It may not be convenient.

An Hon. Member: That is not correct.

Mr. Robert King: However, it is necessary. You talk about collaboration, but the moment we have a differing opinion it is a problem for you.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: It is not a problem for us.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Members.

Mr. Robert King: Well, what could be said is that you used every means at your disposal to make sure that you stayed in power. So . . .

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: We need to do things a different way in the interest of the people of this country. It needs to be based on facts and evidence and what subject matter experts say we ought to do for the people that we represent.

Let us be honest about it. If we are saying that what the Chamber has reported on is not accurate, that is a problem. If you are suggesting that what we are presenting is inaccurate when it is based on the figures and documents that you guys have provided, that is also a problem. We have to find a different way of actually collaborating and working together to solve the ills of this country. Thank you.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member—MP Simmons . . . MP Swan.

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

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

Mr. Speaker in retort to the speaker who just took his seat from constituency 10. Earlier this year

we had a General Election of which we are all aware. And there is one thing that I learned sitting in another place which I went there in 1998 and I represented a different organisation at that particular time that no longer exists. But it's files and stuff went to where the Opposition sits today. So, you can pick the bones out of that.

But I will say this, the Progressive Labour Party and Colonel Burch, who sat in this House very admirably as Minister of Public Works, used to go down lunchtime after we had had a heated session and come back and then he would open up the page of the Progressive Labour Party Platform. And he would go through, and he would say, *En train–done; en train–done; en train–done.* Because one thing that it was difficult to argue against was that for many years going back to 1968, and I learnt this in Opposition when we had a library—I have spoken to that many times before and I look for the day when we have [the library] again in a revamped House of Parliament up on the hill—always came with a platform.

And it was not one that was based on what current opinion was or what current feeling was or a pamphlet that we saw in the last election by the One Bermuda Alliance, who remains in Opposition. It was some carefully thought-out solutions and a way forward based on an ethos, and a way of thinking. All right? Put together by some people you know far better than I, Mr. Speaker. And I know some of them very well as well, even before I became a member of the Progressive Labour Party.

And so, right now, six months are passed January when the election was called. Having presented a platform and a Throne Speech in November and a platform initiative from 2020 that some are still a work in progress, the Progressive Labour Party is working according to a plan. Is it the plan that the OBA wants? No! Because the OBA's pamphlet plan got rejected in 2017, 2020 and 2025.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And until Members on that side appreciate that we are elected based on trust. Not trust in people believing in what they are trying to resell and repackage and get consultants to put in a fancy way. It is based on people. Ordinary people on Slip Road, ordinary people on Hog Bay Level, ordinary people on . . . what?—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, no. Field View Lane. All right? Field View Lane.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I didn't know there was a Field View Lane. I said to a Member from Pembroke, I said, *Where is Field View Lane?*

He said, *You are walking in my constituency.*

I said, *Where is the view of the field?*

He said, *That is because you are not a pond dog.*

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But I can tell you where White Hill Field is. And I can tell him where the field is that cricket is going to be won [on] this year by St. George's Cricket Club is on. Wellington Oval.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: No, no, no. You just lost it.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But I am here to say is that until . . . But I want to give kudos to the Shadow Minister responsible that speaks [for] Tourism. I saw a recent article that had some solutions listed. And I want to give credit to that. Because that is what I learned from the Member celebrating the very historic birthday. I learned that from her brother Brutus, when I was in Opposition. Your friends tell you what? Not what you want to hear; what you need to hear. And Brutus says, *Stop going up there criticising every week. Take a page out of our book. Come with some solutions.* And that Honourable Member has put forward some solutions. One of which was delivered the very same day, today. So, he was on time.

But a solution does not come today unless there is some work that has been done well ahead of time. So, kudos to our Minister responsible for Tourism and responsible for Sport and Culture for looking at what is required in this space.

And if we are going to get some good service out of an Opposition, you know you just cannot come here and say what you think . . . what you would like people to think.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: What you would like people to think. Yes, I remember somebody saying to me, *You know, we need change.* You know what change to them meant? Change meant people change in the way they viewed them. And they kept being the same.

Bob Marley said, *You can run away, you can run, you can run, you can run.* But who can't you run from?

An Hon. Member: Yourself.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You cannot run from yourself. And yourself is a problem for this country. Because you are elected to be responsible.

You know someone told me when I was in Opposition, he said, *Swan, you know, you can say anything because you have the luxury of being irresponsible.* But that was not what I studied of the PLP for 30 years in Opposition. For 30 years in Opposition coming with solutions that the then Government took up, which prolonged their time in Opposition, but they were irresponsible. But when they came in that mindset did not stop. We are still looking at ways in which we can better this country.

And I welcome too solutions being offered by Members opposite. So, I will encourage others to take the vein of Member Richardson *[sic]* who came with . . . Robinson, sorry, I apologise. There is nothing worse in my profession [than] getting someone's name wrong. I did not do it intentionally. I did it by mistake. They came with some solutions.

Now, on the subject of solutions, the Opposition continued week in and week out, led by the Member who speaks opposite of a very good young Minister, my good friend, Minister Hayward, talking about increasing the population. And Member Famous spoke to it very well.

That narrative was a playbook in the 1970s when the electoral roll used to be re-established every year. Why? Because it would disenfranchise persons who did not register to vote. The Progressive Labour Party was one of the first to change (when the Progressive Labour came into power) into perpetuating rolls so persons would not be disenfranchised.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: [INAUDIBLE]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And that is important. And that came on the heels of . . . Hey, look, I ran in 1983 and I ran in 1998 on the dual-seat constituencies. I think there are only one or two Members still around who may have done that. Maybe, one, two, three.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Four.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Who ran on the dual-seat constituencies in the 1980s and 1990s and up until 1998. And that did not work in favour of the wider population. Because you had persons who came here . . . and back then in the 1970s, if you came from certain countries, particularly the United Kingdom, you could be on the electoral roll within a couple of months. And you could be guaranteed status within a couple of years. And that did not benefit the country. And it was wrong! [It was] in the midst of the country having commissions [of] inquiries, Pitt Report (right?), Tumin Report, and all types of reports that led to major disruption in this country, you know?

[Do] you know what? One of the major things that bothers me about our current constitutional status is that even back in the day when you had persons coming here who represented the crown, you had governors come to this country who were political. So, they had an understanding of what it was like to represent a constituency. You had governors like [the] pictures down at Blue Waters Anglers Club.

My young uncle, who is 94 today, was the youngest member of Blue Waters Anglers Club when it was founded in 1958 being presented his prize by Martonmere. Or my uncle, who was the pro at Ocean View in 1955, being presented a prize with Sir Julian Gascoigne because they had a social conscience and recognised there was a social climate that was necessary to be mindful of and participated in bringing communities together.

Today we have (and no disrespect to anybody who works for the Foreign, Commonwealth [and Development] Office) career diplomats serving us there, so the politics of what exists in this country is lost on them. It does not work in the same fashion it is supposed to work—for the people of this country.

And just the irony . . . you know, I always said the good Lord has a wicked sense of humour. But when you are under the colonial system, it has the worst sense of humour. [The irony] is that we are paying for it! [If] anyone asks me why I would have voted in 1995 for independence, [it is] because it is the best thing for this country to realise its true potential, a country that competes against its own mother, Britain, for its survival against the major OECDs.

The solutions will come from people who represent this country and who stand on both sides of the political divide, hold hands and look at solutions on how to come out of the pandemic, how to move forward through economic crises throughout decades, [and] have the ability to figure out how to stand on our own. It is not something that just happened; it is something we have been doing for a long time. But it benefits persons who have it all who do not want to surrender it.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I was trained in a profession whose hallmark is fairness. And this system remains unfair. We did not create it. And it benefits those who turn a blind eye.

On my final few minutes, I want to go here again.

An Hon. Member: Take your time. Take your time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I cannot help it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You know, in 1993, Mr. Speaker, you were in the House at that particular time. I think the Honourable Member Furbert was in the House at that particular time as well. We had an

exodus of the United States' military forces. Sam Donaldson's exposé caused the US bases that were looking to wind down around the world . . . [They] probably would have stayed in Bermuda had it not been for those (golf again) guys being caught on the golf course, probably some at Tucker's Point, some at Castle Harbour, and many of the working-class military in St. George's. The military provided housing in the eastern parishes and in the western parishes because there was a US presence up there too. [There was a] Canadian presence up there as well. [It] provided housing. It provided economic activity because they did not all live on the base. And it was transient. So, people were coming in and out.

No one gets up and says, *What was the economic impact on that presence in this country?* [From] Canadian bases up in Dockyard, Malabar up in Dockyard, two US bases in Southampton in my community and in St. George's my adopted community. A dead exodus. And persons are coming here wanting to replace that dearth with what this country . . . And the Honourable Member Jamahl Simmons (that speech needs to be played and played again) wants to go back in time there. He cannot go back there. No, we cannot go back there. We must go forward.

You know, we had over 12,000 beds. Today we are probably around 3,500 beds or there abouts. Right? One thing the figures do show—we had a great number of hotels back 20 years ago, and we have very little today. Right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And let me say that. Those persons—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Those persons took those hotels and made them condominiums.

[Crosstalk and desk thumping]

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Now he's . . . Yes, yes, yes, yes! You . . . You . . . You just talk long enough, and you have been . . . Those hotels went into the private sector.

What I am saying is this. I did not expect . . . And thankfully, we see Elbow Beach being sold in the future. We see the Princess being developed. Right? We see the remnants of other interests percolating around the country. But you got to dare to think. Well, Luther . . . Here and now, I promise to serve you faithfully.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Here and now, we have an opportunity to increase the population. How? Visit . . . a population in Bermuda can stay in hotels that are undersold between November 1 and May. Someone join the chorus and convince people that we need to move our focus towards getting more business here in the winter.

You know, last year when I was laid up in bed because of medical things, I did a little reading (more so) and historical research. In [the] 1890s and so forth, Bermuda was well-established as a tourism destination with persons sailing here—sailing, not flying—and staying in St. George's—the SS *Victoria* and the like. And St. Georgians like Louis Rafael (Kid) Corbin taking his first travel out of Bermuda in 1921 to go teach golf up in the United States, and the like. But you know, between 1922 and 1931, Bermuda had seven golf courses built. In the 1890s, you had the future President Woodrow Wilson. You had Samuel Clemens. In 1912, you had William Taft, President of the United States, around that time coming to Bermuda—shakers and movers influencing their people in high value.

Just this week . . . I did not mention on congrats, but I will.

Pan Am [was] flying in here. I declare my interest. The principals of Pan Am in Bermuda, Bermuda Properties, sponsored me in Europe playing golf (I might add) to play on the European Tour. Mr. Juan Trippe, he owned Pan Am. He owned Castle Harbour. When the Pan Am flight used to fly out of Bermuda at seven o'clock, do you think he took all types of red tape to figure it out? The congressman from Scranton, Pennsylvania that was on the board, that was his responsibility maybe to make a call or two to people in high places to make some things happen for the betterment of the country and maybe for the private individual interest. So, I have had some appreciation for what the private sector brings to the equation. And I am not wedded to the fact, you know, Mr. Speaker, that—Let me just take a little drink of water.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I am going to close my few minutes with this, that in the spirit of solutions that a young Member came with and in the spirit of a speech of which Honourable Member Simmons spoke of and articulated that another Member had spoken to, I would urge the Opposition to look for solutions right across the board. Stop looking at anyone who is PLP as not having any ability [or] intellect to be able to navigate this country forward. But during the pandemic when the balanced budget was predicted, this country and its former Finance Minister had to make serious decision[s] to help people. And it did. And it had to wait a couple of years to be able to recalibrate and get back on that track of Throne Speech initiatives that

had been promised and delayed because of a pandemic.

[It was] not too different [from] 2007 or 2005 when the country was in buoyancy and persons opposite were blaming the PLP for the global recession. That is what was done.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is what was done. The PLP were blamed for the global . . . The PLP was the reason why XL went down, shares went down to two, why AIG changed their name to Chartis, while Madoff and Stanford tore the hearts out of persons who put their hard-earned insurance money into gas tubes to be collected by my cousin, Mr. Powell, up there in Southampton, while persons who had their pensions and their retirements in places like British American could not realise it. The PLP were paying for that because that is what the Opposition does, be irresponsible, blame the Government for everything, and sometimes it sticks because the great unwashed that followed the narrative. But I am encouraging folks there to be more responsible in their leadership. Look for the solutions and stop looking at us as not caring about the country. I am prepared to accept that you care about Bermuda, but the people have already told you three times over—three or four—that the way you want to do it does not cut it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I will deal with that comment on another day when it is appropriate, but I know from whence I came. And I know a little bit from whence he came, too. So be careful what you ask for. You just might get it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any—MP Ben . . . Opposition Deputy Leader, you have your 20 minutes.

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

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

Mr. Speaker, I think today MP Famous opened a door to some dialogue that I think is actually important for this House and for the country to have.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Ben Smith: We have a population crisis—ageing population. Everybody here is agreed because we have said it multiple ways. The statistics have shown us—ageing population, low birth rate, emigration—all of these factors. Bermuda is not the only country in the world that is dealing with these factors, and multiple countries in the world are trying to find ways to solve this problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the word *status* is brought up, it automatically is then used in a way that only has negative connotations. But I am going to ask if there are any Members in here who do not have family members who got to Bermuda as non-Bermudians and received status so that they could be here today.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Ben Smith: We also know that we have people who are gold medal winners for this country, status Bermudians. We have heroes who came here from other countries. So, we cannot paint the brush that status only leads to a certain group of people. But this is the part that you actually have to look at—twenty years of being in a country.

Right now, we have an economy that is being held together by international business. Everything we do seems to be about making sure that that group has what they need so that they can support everything else in our community. That is where the reports are coming from; our ratings are coming from the influx of finances that are coming from that industry. We used to be majority tourism. We have moved to almost full support coming from international business.

But, Mr. Speaker, the majority of those people and their finances come from somewhere else. And we are moving into a CIT, which will mean we will be even more connected to how their resources take care of our country. And there are multiple countries that want to have those same people move to their shores. And they will incentivise them to get them to move to their shores.

So, when you hear us say, “stop floodgates,” I will unpack that for you, because I sat on the Immigration Reform Committee in 2017 and 2018 when we discussed the different ways of how we could move things forward. And when we looked at the statistics, there were no floodgates. The number was not so big as the boogieman message that everybody would like to think was the issue. It is not it. Because thousands of people actually left when the six-year rule came in place. So, what you actually have is people who have been able to stay in Bermuda for an extended period of time because they had multiple work permits that were approved under both of these administrations. That is how they ended up being here that long, paying into our charities, paying into our grocery stores, hiring Bermudians. Those are the actual people we are talking about when we make these blanket statements. They are also part of the country.

When we have emigration, we have to make sure that we understand that, yes, Bermudians who for multiple generations have been in this country are leaving. But if you are the child of a PRC holder . . . PRC is the alternative that has been pushed a lot by

this present Government, and I know that MP Famous was not somebody who wanted to increase the amount of PRCs when we were sitting on that committee.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Ben Smith: But where we are is this. The children of those PRCs born in Bermuda, growing up in Bermuda, participating in our sports, they are thinking to themselves, *Am I really part of this country?* And they are part of that group that is emigrating and not coming back, educated in Bermuda, part of our community.

So, when we are having this conversation about emigration, let's make sure that we are having a full conversation, both sides. This is not a simple issue. And there is nobody on this side that is talking about floodgates. If somebody has been in this country for 20 years, is that not enough giving back? Is that not enough of being part of our community? Is that the message that you are telling them? You are telling them, *Here we want you to be part of our charities. We want you to pay. We want you to create jobs. We want you to do all these things.* But understand the issue is our competitors are saying, *Come over here. We are going to show you what we can give you.* [It is] still not about floodgates, but we cannot have a closed-mind, closed-door idea and tell our population that everything that is foreign is bad while we are using that finance and these people to support everything that we are doing in our community.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: The issue—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: The issue is—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: —when the Government puts forward—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member is misleading this House and the people of the country. We have never said that foreign people in this country are bad. Never. That needs to be withdrawn.

The Speaker: Okay. Just be more mindful of how you present that piece.

Mr. Ben Smith: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have people that are coming into this country presently. We have a major project that is happening where there are multiple foreign workers who are coming in to be part of that project. That is the reality. And the argument that comes out (right?), because we are not being open and honest about the fact that we are going to need these workers in order for us to move forward, there are people here who are not speaking English.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Those are two different things.

The Speaker: Let him speak to the Chair now.

Mr. Ben Smith: But the issue is,—

The Speaker: —Let him speak to the Chair.—

Mr. Ben Smith: —Mr. Speaker, when you are talking about just letting in anybody who has been here for three or four years, the way past speakers have talked about this issue, that is not what anybody has been referring to.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: It is targeted. So, the solution piece—you have to at least be honest that having that open opportunity needs to be part of the discussion.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Ben Smith: Well, we have had multiple speakers make it seem like this is specifically a race issue, that it only—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Point of—

Mr. Ben Smith: Multiples.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. Whether deliberately or intentionally, I do not know. But at no time have we talked about race at this time. Not at . . .

The Speaker: The point centres on the number of people coming in. I did not think it was tied to race.

Mr. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, when we start throwing terms around—*gentrification* and . . . Listen, the issue is this. Race is always connected with this. Historically, this has always been an issue. So, if you do not get up and actually clarify what it is you are referring to when you tie the history to the present, this is where this problem comes. So, it is about actually having conversations openly—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House because I cannot understand how he has gotten up here, built a strawman saying we are saying things, asking for clarification from the Government when the point is that the One Bermuda Alliance has now nailed its colours to the mast with one of its Shadow Ministers coming out again in support of granting status to PRC holders which is something that they have repeatedly denied during successive election campaigns. And you cannot be asking us to clarify our position; our position is clear. Clarify yours.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Minister.

Mr. Ben Smith: I will make it clear. I will make it clear because I am pretty sure I said it a couple of times.

If you have allowed people to stay in the country and given them work permits so that they are here for 20 years, and now you have allowed them PRCs . . . Because just understand, they are already purchasing property. All those pieces are already happening. Their children are now being able to work here because they are going out and getting their [belonger status]. So, all of those pieces are already there. What I am talking about right now is 20-plus years.

The way this happens is now you have multiple generations of people who now do not have the ability to call themselves Bermudian when generations of people who are in this country right now got here from another country. They are now able to say, *I am a Bermudian,* and point to somebody who will [have been] here for 20 years—multiple generations—and they still cannot have it. That is the conversation that I think is important that we do have.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Okay, what happens?

Mr. Ben Smith: And that is the reason I am bringing it up.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: When I am talking about status, that is what I am referring to—

An Hon. Member: —20 years. It's 2025 and it is just now . . . You all denied that.

Mr. Ben Smith: I am not denying anything.

The Speaker: Let the . . . Let the Member speak.

Mr. Ben Smith: This is me on my feet telling you what the position is.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Let the Member speak.

Mr. Ben Smith: This is the position I gave when I was in that committee.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: So, unless you did not read the minutes, you would now.

An Hon. Member: I'm happy you have one now.

Mr. Ben Smith: So, the situation for us is clear. We have to look at every lever for how we can make sure, one, part of increasing the population means you have to stop the hole in the bucket where we are losing population—the emigration of Bermudians and the children of the people who you do not want to give status to saying, *You educated me, but you told me that I was not actually a part of you. So, I am going to find another jurisdiction to move to.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Ben Smith: That is part of it. That is the conversation that you actually have to have because remember—

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: I hope you know that. We will survive.

Mr. Ben Smith: And the Minister is saying that we will survive.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Ben Smith: But look at this, because the population decreases . . . We are talking about cost of living. Look at health care numbers. Mr. Speaker, that alone—

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Ben Smith: —as the population gets older and shrinks, and the working population says, *I am not going to continue to pay into that,* and leaves, the price of that health care will continue to go up. So, if we are not going to be serious and look at every lever that has to be pulled in order for us to make sure we are increasing that population by making ourselves more attractive to bring those people here, then we are doing a disservice to our country.

It is not about floodgates; it is about saying we know that this is a major problem. And [it is] the same as other countries in the world that are having to change based off of *You know what? This is the way we have been doing things up until now, but we have to target the way that we are going to move forward.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Ben Smith: You have an opportunity to get to your feet, and you also have an opportunity to go on Google and look at all the countries that are dealing with the exact same situation as Bermuda.

We cannot continue to put our heads in the sand and blame things on just what has happened way in the past. This Government has the ability to move forward in a direction because they have been in control.

Listen, they have been here since 1998. We keep going back to 2017, but they have to take credit for a lot of where we are today because it has been an extended period of time that they have been in charge of this.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: So, for us, this is not just an immigration issue. But it is important that we start to actually have a proper dialogue about what this means. We cannot continue to let our population think that this is just a boogieman that we cannot move forward. If we continue to make the group of people who are supporting this country feel that . . . You know what? We will give them everything, but they actually cannot be Bermudian for the next three generations. At some point, they start to look at the attraction of our competitors and say, *They want us. Bermuda does not want us—*

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Ben Smith: *—Bermuda is now going to tax us. So maybe we should go somewhere else.*

We need to at least start to have that conversation because if we do not, we are going to find ourselves in a completely different situation 10 years from now with a population that cannot sustain itself even further than the situation that we are in today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Premier, would you like your 20 minutes on the clock?

GRANTING OF BERMUDIAN STATUS

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will promise you that I will not take 20 minutes, but let me say this.

I am happy that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has finally nailed the One Bermuda Alliance's colours to the mast. And I say that because, Mr. Speaker, in 2017 after their disastrous attempt at immigration reform, after rebuffing multiple attempts from the Progressive Labour Party to have a bipartisan process, they removed the Shadow Minister who raised this particular issue when he was a Minister, moved him away, put someone else in charge and said, *We have changed. We are not doing that anymore.*

[In] 2017, [there was] never a mention in their platform about Pathways to Status, a policy of which they promoted. In 2020, [you] could not even find a mention of status in any of the particular documents of which they raised. And in 2025, in their platform and their pamphlets, whatever they put out, [there was] never a mention of status grants to PRC holders. Not one!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Why? Why?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Why?

Hon. E. David Burt: Not one!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But now, all of a sudden, in a Cost of Living Summit and [with] the comments from the Shadow Minister who is now back in Home Affairs dealing with matters related to cost of living, he now sets the policy for the One Bermuda Alliance that their leader was afraid to put inside of their platform that they would never mention. That they would deny. I even remember the Honourable Member for constituency 30 writing op-eds saying, *No, that is not our plan.*

An Hon. Member: That's right. He did.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The One Bermuda Alliance has always—

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The point of order is that the Honourable Premier is misleading the House. So that the Ministers can hear very clearly—he is misleading the House. I have not written op-eds of any sort. I have always said that the One Bermuda Alliance has stood on comprehensive immigration reform. That is the quote. He can always pull it up on Google.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member, because he just made the exact point of which I have said.

An Hon. Member: Correct!

Hon. E. David Burt: When we have said their word for comprehensive reform is a smokescreen for their plan to extend status to PRC holders, they come back and say, *No that is not what we mean. We mean comprehensive immigration reform. Not the only thing.*

Well, guess what. We had a bipartisan committee on immigration reform. We were the first party to introduce PRCs back in 1999 when the United Bermuda Party, of which your Member for constituency 10 has tied yourself to. Let's be clear on that one. Number one.

Number two—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Robert King: Point of order. He is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The point I was making was that it was not the PLP Government, and it was not us, and things were prospering under a former administration. That was the point I was making.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, can I continue?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let me go on because this will be a little bit fun.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, we then . . . We then . . . Now here today that . . . As I said, they have finally now nailed their colours to the mast. But the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition just got up and said that we need to have a proper conversation, an honest dialogue on this issue. Mr. Speaker, I put it to you. How on earth can you have a proper conversation and dialogue if you refuse to actually state what your position is?

The first time this position has been a part of any statement from any Member of the frontbench of the One Bermuda Alliance is today, 2025. It has taken you eight years to come back to the position that we know that you have always held.

Some Hon. Members: Correct. Correct. Correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, thank you for saying—

[Inaudible interjections]

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

I just want to make sure that this is clear because you cannot have an honest conversation if you are afraid, unable, and will not have the courage of your convictions to state your position. So now, Mr. Speaker, it is important that the One Bermuda—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: —that the One Bermuda Alliance has now stated their position.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I am now happy that they have decided.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I think it is now great that they have decided to be honest about their position. Now here is what I will say, Mr. Speaker, because I think that it is particularly important—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: —and this, Mr. Speaker, is the comment that I will make.

The Honourable Shadow Minister from constituency 20, the Learned Member Michael Fahy, in

his discussion in the second arm of the combined opposition, *The Royal Gazette,* has decided to make this around matters related to population. And his view is that the granting of status to persons with PRC will increase the population of the country. That is his argument. Mr. Speaker, with your permission I would like to read into the record a Statement that I gave in this Honourable House in 2016.

An Hon. Member: Oh-oh.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: And I quote—

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: [1]"The OBA has proposed *Pathways to Status*. It is important that, when we discuss this program, we are talking about individuals who are already here on the Island and, in most cases, working. What is not clear to Bermudians is how granting existing residents PRC or Bermudian status helps with the Government's stated objective of (and I quote) 'increasing the size of Bermuda's working population.' They are already a part of the working population. Allowing them to stay indefinitely does not mean there are more people on the Island; it just means that it is one less job or position that is free from work permit controls."

So, Mr. Speaker, if . . . *if* . . . *if* the view is that granting status to PRC holders will increase the population of the country, I will only ask the One Bermuda Alliance to take their time to explain to the people of this country how.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Their children.

Hon. E. David Burt: How? Oh, that is fine. You can go ahead put out your position papers. Your MP has already said that you are going to review your policy on this. Go ahead. I am happy that you have decided to come clean, say what you are going to do. Go right on ahead.

But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. Here is what I will give the Opposition today.

An Hon. Member: More emigration.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See, Mr. Speaker? This is a serious topic, but it seems as though they are over here laughing because policy has to make sense.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Policy has to make sense. And see, here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. They now are all excited having their thing.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is a whole lot of noise coming out here.

The Speaker: Yes. Members. Members! Let's allow us to get to the end.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is a whole lot of noise going on on this side, all over there. But there are two things. Number one, the One Bermuda Alliance's immigration policy was rejected by the voters of this country.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: If the One Bermuda Alliance wants the Government to support their policies, then they need to become the Government.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, Mr. Speaker, when they say, *It has taken you eight years. Get on with it,* it forgets the fact, Mr. Speaker, that in their four years in office, they were unable to make any progress on immigration reform after being invited to collaborate to advance it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But, Mr. Speaker . . . But, Mr. Speaker . . . So, let's be clear. When we came into office, we kept our promise to have bipartisan consultation and advance the most significant immigration reforms the country had seen since 1999, Mr. Speaker. That is what you are able to do when you have principled leadership, cooperative leadership, consultative leadership, and bipartisan leadership on this issue. So, I look forward to them putting forward their plan. Maybe they might even bring a motion here for debate in the House explaining to people how granting status to PRC holders will increase the population.

But now, Mr. Speaker. Let me, with your permission, please read into the record a Statement that I made in this Honourable House in 2013. It was on the occasion of the first Budget Reply that I was honoured to offer on behalf of the Progressive Labour Party in which we spoke about immigration and offered an olive branch to the then Government to work collaboratively on these issues. Now here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. I want to read it.

[1] *Official Hansard Report*, 26 February 2016, page 710

And I quote. We will however, Mr. Speaker, lay down this marker that,[2] "It has been the long standing position of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party that we will not support the introduction of granting of Bermudian Status outside of our current laws prior to Bermuda becoming an independent nation.

"We support immigration reform, as foreign labour and talent is vital to our economy and our future, but we will not support such reforms to be used as a pretext to extend status to PRC holders. That, Mr. Speaker, is our red line."

Mr. Speaker, allow me to state as the Leader of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party that red line still stands. However, Mr. Speaker, I will say this. I will happily engage [with] the Opposition if they want to meet us halfway. If status is so important, then let's have a real conversation so that we can extend not Bermuda *status* to PRC holders but Bermuda *citizenship* to PRC holders.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: If you are really serious, I will make the time and place available to sit down so we can come here to this House and say, *Yes, we want to move forward in granting Bermudian citizenship.* And I will happily grant and support the extension of Bermuda citizenship to any PRC holder upon this country becoming a nation, Mr. Speaker.

So, if we want to talk about having a serious, real, and honest conversation, I will put that down right now. I go back to 2013, Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago. If we want to be serious, let's have the conversation. All the persons. But that is the position of the Progressive Labour Party. And as long as I am the Leader of this party, that position will not change. So, Mr. Speaker, the ball is now in their court. If they—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Do not worry. We understand where we are; we are clear where we are. *We are clear where we are.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Hold on a second. He keeps on speaking. He keeps on speaking.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: *Bermuda is broken. Cannot fix it. Bermuda is broken. Cannot fix it.*

The Speaker: All right. Let's . . . remember where we are.

Hon. E. David Burt: It does not matter how many independent agencies—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —how many record employment records we have, how many things keep going on. That is their particular position. But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. I will say it one more time. The Bermuda Government will happily confer Bermuda citizenship to PRC holders if the Opposition wants to meet us to advance it to the space where we are not giving Bermuda *status* but we are giving *citizenship* of a sovereign Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Members, with those comments, the House now stands adjourned until July 11. Members, enjoy your time away. Relax and be safe. And think of your family and friends during this period.

See you on July 11.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House now stands adjourned.

[At 1:42 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 11 July 2025.]

[2] *Official Hansard Report,* 1 March 2013, page 156

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
11 JULY 2025
10:01 AM

Sitting Number 16 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[27 June 2025]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from the 27th of June have been circulated.

Are there any amendments required?

There are none. The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 27 June 2025 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE— CYBERATTACK ON GOVERNMENT IT SYSTEMS

The Speaker: I am naming the Joint Select Committee on the Cyberattack . . . and the committee had been established before but had to be reestablished after the election. The chairman of that committee will continue as MP Lawrence Scott. Members are MP Dwayne Robinson, Senator Foley, MP Jamahl Simmons, and MP Scott Simmons. They will continue.

Thank you.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: We have two such papers this morning. The first is in the name of the Junior Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF BENEFITS) ORDER 2025

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly, the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits) Order 2025, proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 37 of the Contributory Pensions Act 1970. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second [paper] this morning is in the name of the Minister of Works.

Minister.

WATER RESOURCES (PREVENTION OF POLLUTION BY SEWAGE FROM BOATS) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Water Resources (Prevention of Pollution by Sewage from Boats) Amendment Regulations 2025 as made by the Minister responsible for the Environment in exercise of the power conferred by section 39 of the Water Resources Act 1975. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: Members, I am going to seek the indulgence of the House and just switch the order slightly. We are going to do Item No. 6 first.

Minister, would you wish to proceed with that now?

BERMUDA YOUTH LIBRARY RENAMED THE FLORENZ WEBBE MAXWELL YOUTH LIBRARY

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with immense pride to announce that come July 21, the Bermuda Youth Library will be renamed the Florenz Webbe Maxwell Youth Library.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: There is no one more fitting to lend their name to this place where our children discover the joy of reading. This renaming is a tribute to Mrs. Florenz Webbe Maxwell—a woman whose courage, service, and devotion to Bermuda's youth have helped shape our Island for the better.

Mr. Speaker, this idea to honour Mrs. Maxwell started with a grassroots suggestion. A respected former educator, Ms. Shirley Pearman, was the first to propose it, writing to me with the thought. Our Director of Libraries and Archives, Ms. Joanne Brangman, immediately backed the idea. When I approached Mrs. Maxwell for her blessing, she was humble and deeply moved. She expressed surprise and gratitude, mentioning how much the Youth Library has always meant to her. Her emotional response confirmed that we should honour her in this way during her lifetime. We are not simply renaming a building; we are celebrating a beloved community icon and showing her what she means to us.

Mr. Speaker, many in Bermuda are familiar with Mrs. Florenz Webbe Maxwell's remarkable story. She is a retired librarian, an award-winning author, and a true hero of our Island. At a very young age, she was part of a group of 18 young people known as The Progressive Group, which organised the 1959 Theatre Boycott—a peaceful protest that led to the end of segregation in our movie theatres. That watershed moment sparked the dismantling of racial segregation in other areas of Bermudian life, from hotels and restaurants to schools. Mrs. Maxwell's courage in 1959 demonstrated that one young person armed with conviction and determination can transform an entire community.

Mr. Speaker, after fighting for racial equality, Mrs. Maxwell devoted the rest of her career to empowering young people through knowledge. In 1969, she joined the Bermuda Library Service at a time when it was almost impossible for a Black Bermudian woman to become a librarian. Our libraries were still segregated then. She started in the most junior position, working as a messenger and book assistant just to get her foot in the door. Through perseverance and a love of learning, she earned her qualifications and in 1974 became the Head of the Youth Library.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Maxwell devoted nearly 30 years to transforming the Youth Library into a magical space for children. She brought stories to life with regular storytelling hours and special bedtime reading nights where children arrived in their pyjamas for stories, cookies, and milk. She made the library fun and engaging with reading contests, puppet shows, and even a Dial-a-Story telephone line that children could call on weekends to hear a story read aloud. She nurtured young writers through creative writing workshops, proudly displaying children's own stories alongside published books. She also made the library a centre of cultural pride, with Al Seymour, Jr. teaching children to make Bermuda kites every Easter and sharing our Island's traditions. Long before the phrase "youth empowerment" became common, Mrs. Maxwell was empowering our youth, making every child who entered these doors feel seen, inspired, and valued. Under her guidance, the Youth Library was more than a library; it became a lively community hub for learning, creativity, and Bermudian culture.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Maxwell's passion for storytelling did not end when she retired from the library in the late 1990s. Retirement marked the beginning of a new chapter dedicated to our heritage. In 2008, she published *The Spirit Baby and Other Bermudian Folktales*, preserving local legends that might have otherwise been lost to time. Then, in 2017, she realised a lifelong dream by publishing her first novel, *Girlcott*.

Drawing on her own experiences during the Theatre Boycott, *Girlcott* follows a teenage Bermudian girl coming of age amid segregation and social change. This powerful story captivated readers both in Bermuda and abroad. *Girlcott* secured second place in the 2016 Burt Award for Caribbean Literature, and it was highlighted in Oprah Winfrey's *O Magazine* as a must-read, raising Bermuda's story on the world stage.

Just last year, *Girlcott* was chosen for a "One Island, One Book" reading initiative at The Berkeley Institute, uniting students and the community in learning from our shared history. Mrs. Maxwell thanks Ms. Ingrid Applewhaite, Instructional Team Leader of English at The Berkeley Institute, with her committee Cheryl-Ann Griffin, Steve Smith, and Sharon Dublin, who made this literary initiative a resounding success. Through her writing, Mrs. Maxwell has inspired new generations to engage with Bermuda's past and carry its lessons forward.

Mr. Speaker, what is truly extraordinary is that, through all these accomplishments, Mrs. Maxwell has remained, first and foremost, a mentor and role model for Bermuda's youth. As a Black woman who grew up in a segregated Bermuda, she had to fight for every opportunity. Because she fought, Bermuda is a fairer place today. Because she persevered, countless children in Bermuda had a librarian who looked like them,

believed in them, and helped them believe in themselves. She once said that discovering your gift and pursuing it is the key to fulfilment. And she lived those words.

Mrs. Maxwell discovered her gift for education and storytelling, and she pursued it with passion. In doing so, she became a guardian of our culture—a tradition-bearer who passed on the light of knowledge and heritage to the next generation. Even now, well into her 90s, Mrs. Maxwell continues to be an inspiration. She still shares Bermudian folktales at events, encourages young writers, and shows us all that the spirit of service and storytelling can shine throughout a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, in naming the Youth Library after Florenz Webbe Maxwell we ensure that her legacy endures at the very heart of our community. Every child who enters that library will see her name and become curious to learn about her. They will discover a woman who courageously stood up against injustice and then dedicated her life to opening doors of knowledge for all children. They will see that one person's bravery and kindness can truly transform their world. This is the lesson we are immortalising—that the actions of a single individual can inspire and uplift many others across generations.

Mr. Speaker, later this month, on 21 July, we will hold a small ceremony to unveil the Florenz Webbe Maxwell Youth Library officially. Mrs. Maxwell, her family, and close colleagues will gather to celebrate this moment. Although the event itself will be intimate, this tribute is one that all of Bermuda shares.

I invite everyone in our community to take part in honouring Mrs. Maxwell's legacy. Visit the Youth Library in the coming weeks and feel the significance of the change. Tell your children or grandchildren about Mrs. Maxwell—about how her courage and dedication made a difference in Bermuda. If you have a personal memory of her—perhaps she sparked your love of reading or taught you a lesson you never forgot—please share that story with others. Let us flood our Island with gratitude for Mrs. Maxwell. Write her a note, post a message of thanks online, or pick up one of her books and read it with your family. Together, let's show Mrs. Maxwell how deeply she is appreciated and ensure that her story continues to be known and cherished.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, on behalf of the Government and the people of Bermuda, I want to offer Mrs. Florenz Webbe Maxwell our heartfelt thanks. Thank you, Mrs. Maxwell, for your bravery in 1959, for standing up so that all of us could stand together as equals. Thank you for your decades of service as a librarian, for instilling in thousands of children a love of reading and a pride in our culture. Thank you for showing us that storytelling is a powerful form of service that can nurture a community's soul. Above all, thank you for demonstrating the profound difference one person can make. The Florenz Webbe Maxwell Youth Library will forever remind us of your light and your legacy. May we all be inspired by your example to support our young people, to champion what is right, and to share our stories.

Mrs. Maxwell, we honour you, we celebrate you, and we wish you continued joy as you see the fruits of your labour flourish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Members—Members, we will go back to the original order.

Premier, would you like to present your Statements now?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will, and I would, of course, like to note that Ms.—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay, sorry.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Understood, Mr. Speaker, I will press right on ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RED TAPE REDUCTION PROGRESS

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, in March of 2024, the Government launched the Red Tape Reduction Consultation with a clear purpose: to hear directly from the people of Bermuda on how we can modernise Government, improve service delivery, and reduce bureaucratic barriers that hinder business development and economic activity.

We received over 100 submissions with various suggestions for Government ministries and departments. These were then shared with the relevant Ministers, who have been working with their teams to implement them.

In this year's Budget Statement, I provided a brief overview of the Government's progress. I confirmed that since the consultation closed, the Government had:

- Launched pay.gov.bm, enabling residents to pay for parking tickets online.
- Revamped the Online Services section of the government's website to offer simplified navigation, easier digital application access and submissions, online payments, and improved search capabilities.
- Introduced socialinsurance.gov.bm, where residents can now submit applications for pensions, contribution records, name changes, and benefit claims.

- Initiated phase one of enhanced digital applications for the Transport Control Department (TCD) via forms.gov.bm, including online applications for Project Ride Instructor approvals, tint and signage exemptions, licensing fee exemptions, and vehicle importation and replacement forms.

I rise today to further update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on the Government's Red Tape Reduction Consultation progress. In particular, the progress made from the public within the Ministries of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, Economy and Labour, Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation and the Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the submissions for the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport mainly centred around the desire for more Transport Control Department (TCD) services to be accessible online, simplify licensing processes and reduce waiting times.

Building on its digitisation efforts, I am pleased to share that phase two of the enhanced digital applications at the Transport Control Department will go online on Monday, 14 July. This next phase will introduce additional online services, including

- applications to reclassify a registered vehicle's category;
- a digitised Classic Motor Car application for vehicles 25 years or older; and
- a simplified process for obtaining Sporting Association Trailer Permits.

These upgrades will further streamline the customer experience by reducing the need for in-person visits, improving communication and providing applicants with tailored guidance, regular updates, and estimated response times. By moving more services online, the Ministry is making it easier and more efficient for residents and businesses to navigate essential transport services.

There have also been other meaningful strides in reducing red tape regarding vehicle inspections. As of January 2025, the Ministry has implemented a revised vehicle examination policy, focusing exclusively on critical safety elements such as brakes, tyres, and lights and removing cosmetic issues like faded paint or minor surface rust as grounds for failure.

Ministry of Economy and Labour

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Red Tape Reduction Consultation produced numerous submissions related to immigration processes and employment policy.

I am pleased to report that the Department of Immigration has advanced its comprehensive digitisation project. Steps that have already been taken or underway [include]

- a vendor has been selected;
- a key site visit to The Bahamas took place to see the digitised system and processes in action; and
- a full-time project manager will be hired this summer to oversee implementation.

This project will streamline processing, improve transparency, and ultimately create a dashboard that allows applicants to track the progress of their submissions, one of the most common requests received in the Consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the need for clearer and more accessible work permit policies was another frequent point raised. On 5 June, the Department of Immigration published a revised Work Permit Policy. The revisions are designed to modernise and clarify work permit processes, enhance fairness and transparency and better align with Bermuda's current and future workforce needs. In continuing with this Government's commitment to transparency and inclusive governance, the policy was made available for public consultation after its publication, which closed on 4 July. This ensured that the voices of businesses, workers and stakeholders were again heard and considered before the new policy is scheduled to come into effect in September of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the digitisation of immigration services and the update of work permit policies are foundational steps toward a more efficient and accessible system that better serves the needs of businesses, workers, and families.

Ministry for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation has played a key role in driving improvements to customer service and streamlining Government operations in response to the Red Tape Reduction Consultation.

To further improve service quality automated customer feedback forms were launched [and] are now being monitored with corrective actions taken where necessary. In departments such as Planning, reforms are being made to ensure that applications are assessed holistically, recognising the importance of balancing economic drivers like international business and tourism with fairness and accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has progressed in streamlining the planning and building approval process. This includes

- retroactive applications no longer needing to go to the Minister as appeals, reducing the time to process;
- additional plan reviewers employed to process building permits faster.

These efforts represent a practical, thoughtful response to the suggestions raised during the Red

Tape [Reduction] Consultation and reflect the Government's ongoing commitment to digital transformation and improving how we serve the people of Bermuda.

The Ministry of Health

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health received several submissions from the public focused on two main areas: streamlining professional registrations and addressing health and safety enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Health Council is progressing work on new electronic systems for professional registration. These improvements will help ease administrative burdens by providing a more seamless submission and review process. Submissions were also received calling for the streamlining of occupational health and safety inspections. The review confirmed that delays stemmed from a lack of qualified Safety Officers, which resulted in multiple, uncoordinated inspections. The Ministry has responded by recruiting for vacant posts with the goal of re-establishing routine joint inspections with agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service to reduce red tape and improve efficiency. These changes ensure the Ministry can meet its mandate while delivering services more efficiently to the public.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming message in the Red Tape Reduction Consultation was clear: There is a strong desire for better efficiency, responsiveness, and modernisation in Government processes. This wasn't just an exercise in listening, it was a commitment to act. We have taken action to make Government work better, and we will continue to improve processes throughout the Government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Would you like to do your second Statement?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING— BUILDING ON A STRONG RELATIONSHIP

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the undeniable shared heritage between Bermuda and our Caribbean neighbours makes for the strong relationship that is nurtured by our associate membership in CARICOM. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House of my attendance at the most recent and 49thConference of CARICOM Heads of Government meeting, convened in Montego Bay, Jamaica. This coincides with the assumption of the chairmanship of that Conference of Heads by the Most Honourable Dr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, delegates were favoured with an opening ceremony featuring an address from the outgoing Chair, Prime Minister Mia Mottley of the Republic of Barbados. Prime Minister Mottley has become a global figure but remains committed to the vision of regional integration and ensuring that CARICOM and its related institutions achieve the best outcomes for Caribbean peoples. Her compelling call to action echoes much of what has been said around the world about the urgency of addressing the impact of climate change and shoring up economic diversification and self-sufficiency.

Mr. Speaker, an aggressive agenda was adopted which covered such diverse topics as regional security, the humanitarian crisis in Haiti, regional transport, and telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Bermuda it is always humbling to share our experiences in areas of common challenge and demonstrate the successes which we have enjoyed and the hard work we have devoted to these achievements. Caribbean colleagues are receptive to the Bermuda story, and it was important to renew acquaintances and forge new partnerships in the wake of several elections in various countries since we last met.

Mr. Speaker, with my colleagues the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and the Honourable Member for constituency 14, it was important to build on the work started by the former Honourable Member and Deputy Premier, in pressing for full detail on Bermuda's pursuit of full membership in CARICOM.

Mr. Speaker, with the firm support of the Conference, technical and legal advisors within the CARICOM Secretariat will shortly provide us with the initial considerations for that full membership. These considerations will include financial matters, legal and treaty matters and the areas of negotiation on those terms and conditions which we require be applied to Bermuda's proposed membership.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reiterate that the Government's commitment is to a fulsome process which provides all necessary information to the public as we consider the next steps. The public consultation will be informed by facts and not age-old prejudices. There are too many commonalities between us and the Caribbean to contemplate this strong relationship being weakened by misinformation.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has renewed our association with the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, seen the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Darrin Simons, assume the presidency of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police, and welcomed the participation of the Hon. Larry D. Mussenden, Chief Justice, in the 2025 Conference of Chief Justices and Heads of the Judiciary of the Caribbean, in Nassau, Bahamas.

We are integrated into the Caribbean, Mr. Speaker. We are welcomed by Caribbean entities and

institutions and our service at the highest levels of regional bodies demonstrates that we are respected in and by the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, it is a strong relationship and this most recent attendance at the 49th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government served to strengthen that strong relationship. We look forward to the information now promised and to the engagement with the people of Bermuda that will further inform the next steps in the journey towards full membership in CARICOM.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

DOMESTIC ABUSE SPECIALIST—UPDATE

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to share important progress in our fight to end domestic abuse in Bermuda . . . a fight that affects not just individual families, but the heart of our community.

Mr. Speaker, behind every statistic is a person: A woman terrified to speak out. A man suffering in silence. A child caught in the middle. Domestic abuse does not discriminate; it impacts Bermudians of all backgrounds, ages, and genders. And for far too long, too many have suffered alone.

Recognising the growing urgency, in the 2022 Throne Speech this Government committed to commissioning a full system review of Bermuda's response to domestic abuse. We contracted SafeLives UK to examine our services, collect data, listen to survivors and frontline workers, and tell us, honestly, where we were falling short.

Mr. Speaker, that review gave us a roadmap that has shaped the foundation of Bermuda's first comprehensive five-year Domestic Abuse Strategy, launched in 2023. From this strategy came 10 priority action items, each focused on turning intent into action and words into safety. Today, I am proud to update this Honourable House on one of the most important of those actions, support from a Domestic Abuse Specialist.

Mr. Speaker, in April 2025, the Ministry hired Bermuda's first certified Domestic Abuse Liaison Social Worker, a specialist with over four years of hands-on experience supporting high-risk victims of abuse. This professional is a lifeline that will walk alongside survivors, offering safety planning, emotional support, and access to services. And they do so with compassion, expertise, and deep understanding.

This officer is already working closely with the Department of Child and Family Services and the Centre Against Abuse, as well as the Bermuda Police Service, Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee, known as MARAC.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the public and listening audience, MARAC is a collaborative safety planning team that brings together key agencies to identify, assess, and protect victims at the highest risk of serious harm. Every week they meet to share information, develop coordinated responses, and take action together to keep victims safe and hold abusers accountable.

Mr. Speaker, the new Domestic Abuse Liaison Social Worker has already begun supporting victims who might otherwise have fallen through the cracks. Their work ensures survivors, women and men, do not have to navigate the system alone.

This is one component of a larger initiative. Work has begun on developing a five-year Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan. Initial consultations with internal stakeholders are underway, and engagement with the broader community will follow. Addressing domestic abuse requires contributions from all sectors. Because, to truly end domestic abuse, we must all be part of the solution.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building a Bermuda where abuse is not hidden in the shadows, where survivors are supported, not shamed, and where every Bermudian can live free from fear.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I thank the dedicated members of the MARAC Committee, who meet every week and work tirelessly to action the key priorities of this strategy. Your efforts are helping to build a safer, fairer Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the second Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue?

NATIONAL 18+ YOUTH CONFERENCE 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to share more great news about our young people. From June 30 through to July 6 the Office of Youth Affairs hosted its 2nd Annual National 18+ Youth Conference. Bermuda's youth ages 16 up to 29 were invited to engage in dialogue on the serious issues in Bermuda of antisocial behaviour and mental health.

Mr. Speaker, the conference was designed to address the National Youth Policy Goals 3, 6, and 7, supporting young people to be active and healthy, minimising antisocial behaviour, and enabling civic participation. The event attracted over 60 attendees, and I am

pleased to say that not only was the invitation to this conference accepted, but it was done so enthusiastically.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of a conference for youth is not a new one in Bermuda. I am sure many in this House remember the youth conferences that were hosted by Teen Services in the 1990s—the brainchild of Mrs. Olga Scott, the late former First Lady and Executive Director of Teen Services. During that time, the Youth Education Health Department brought young people from across the Island to learn, have new experiences, showcase their talent and have fun together in an exciting mix of civic engagement and general interest activities. The guest speakers, workshops, awards ceremony, and activities were designed to elevate Bermuda's youth while also ensuring they were prepared to face their future. This mix of events was a miss when they stopped hosting them. However, it is with that same desire to uplift and support our young people that the Office of Youth Affairs introduced the National 18+ Youth Conference in July of last year.

Mr. Speaker, as the times have changed, so have the topics of importance to our youth. With the inaugural conference last year, topics were broad, reflecting all eight of the National Youth Policy goals. This year, however, the Office of Youth Affairs, or TOYA, focused on two topics that surfaced in almost all conversations held with youth and which garnered some of the most compelling feedback. These two topics are antisocial behaviour and mental health.

Mr. Speaker, these topics are not new ones. I acknowledge the work of my colleagues in both the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Health in forwarding agendas to address both. As the Minister for Youth, I also take heed to listen to young people when they speak on their lived experiences. It is my responsibility to act on their behalf. I promise you, they have a lot to say and a real desire to enact solutions almost immediately.

Mr. Speaker, the Conference began with "Mindful Reflections" on Monday, an online video collage remembering and honouring those lost to violence who were under the age of 30. There were 63 people on that list. Let that sink in, Mr. Speaker. Since 2003, Bermuda has lost 63 young souls due to violence. It is truly heartbreaking, but this sobering reality set the tone for the serious conversations which were to follow.

On Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, a roundtable discussion moderated by Mr. Trevor Lindsay was held with high school students to dig into conference topics and share perspectives.

Mr. Speaker, taking the position of meeting young people where they are, the TOYA team took to the streets on Friday evening to connect with youth in an event called Happy Hour Invasion. Through light conversation, giveaways and brief trivia, young adults were made aware of TOYA as well as invited to the conference on the Sunday. It was a definite success as some youth resultantly signed up for the Sunday conference.

Mr. Speaker, on the day before the conference, TOYA made their presence known to the public at the Western Counties Cricket game with a pop-up tent experience. In addition to games and giveaways, attendees visiting the TOYA tent engaged in meaningful dialogue on conference topics "County Couch Conversation" and all things TOYA, with hosts Kamau Leverock and Delray Rawlins.

Mr. Speaker, food for thought and food for the body were promised and delivered on the Sunday of the conference with brunch. Moderators Ajai Peets and Kellan Lewis led a great conversation with panel members, Darren Woods, Chardonaé Rawlins, Cadre Smith, and Ryan Robinson Perinchief. The discussion, comments and questions from the audience ensured that not only were young people's voices heard but their thoughts were given real consideration. What comes next will be a reflection of the information shared.

As the Office of Youth Affairs is on a growth journey, Mr. Speaker, so is their conference. This year, a mini-information fair was introduced during the conference where young people could learn about and engage with organisations that support or engage with young people. I am very appreciative of the organisations that came out to engage with our youth because far too often, we hear there is nothing to do, or they don't know what options are out there for them. I am grateful to the Family Centre, Bermuda is Love, the youth mental health research group, Bermuda Overseas Missions and the Department of Workforce Development for being a part of this event.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that although violence and antisocial behaviour get a lot of attention, the vast majority of our youth are not involved in activities that are contrary to our community values. Nor does everyone involved in antisocial behaviour do so because they do not care about their community. We are living in increasingly complex and pressurised times. The pressure impacts both the old and the young, and our response to those pressures can make or break an individual and our community.

Mr. Speaker, although the two issues of antisocial behaviour and mental health can be seen as two separate topics, there is most certainly synergy and correlations to be found. Our youth are savvy enough to see the connections and advocate for a holistic approach in dealing with it. For that, and many other reasons, I commend them.

Mr. Speaker, the future of our Island demands that we respond in a holistic, nurturing manner. This is what I heard from our youth when I attended the conference, and, with this in mind, this is how I intend to respond. I want to thank the Youth Development Team in the Office of Youth Affairs for not only providing a space for Bermuda's youth to engage with the Government but for doing so in a way that encourages meaningful action into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

BERMUDA'S CYBERSECURITY, ENHANCING CAPABILITIES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House of a significant development in the advancement of Bermuda's national cybersecurity capabilities through our partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Excuse me a second, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I was wondering why things were a little fuzzy, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, the Cybersecurity Act 2024 established a comprehensive legal and institutional framework to strengthen Bermuda's resilience in the face of increasing cyber threats. Among its core provisions is the establishment of a National Cybersecurity Incident Response Team (NCIRT), mandated to monitor threats, issue early warnings, and coordinate incident responses across Government and the private sector. The Act also places the responsibility for the operationalisation and maintenance of the NCIRT squarely with the National Cybersecurity Unit within the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Speaker, in line with these statutory requirements, I am pleased to announce that the Ministry has formally engaged the International Telecommunication Union to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support for the implementation of Bermuda's NCIRT. This engagement directly supports the operational mandates outlined in the Act and ensures that our implementation meets globally recognised standards, including those promoted by the ITU's Global Cybersecurity Index and the CARICOM Cybersecurity Action Plan.

Mr. Speaker, as anticipated this project began on 1 July 2025, and is expected to span 12 to 18 months, during which time the ITU will provide both in-country and remote support. The ITU's assistance includes:

i. Development of the NCIRT's public-facing website, which will provide real-time threat information, awareness resources, and incident reporting tools to Government, businesses, and members of the public.

ii. Configuration and integration of a Threat Intelligence Platform, which will enable the proactive detection, analysis, and mitigation of cyber threats targeting Bermuda.

iii. Advanced training and mentorship for Bermuda's Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) personnel, ensuring they possess the technical proficiency and operational readiness to respond effectively to cybersecurity events.

Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to report that this initiative is being delivered at no cost to the Government of Bermuda. The engagement is part of the ITU's technical assistance programme for small island developing states and reflects Bermuda's active participation in international cyber capacity-building forums. As such, this partnership represents a strategic investment in Bermuda's national security infrastructure without imposing any financial burden on the taxpayer.

This initiative is more than technical support. It is a critical step in building the foundational institutions necessary to protect Bermuda's economy, public services, and national interests in an increasingly digital world. Through this partnership, we are not only meeting our obligations under the Cybersecurity Act 2024 but also ensuring that Bermuda remains in lockstep with international standards for cyber incident response and resilience.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda that cybersecurity remains a top national priority. As technology continues to evolve, so too must our defences. The establishment of the NCIRT and the capacity-building support provided by the ITU are key pillars of a more secure, resilient, and responsive Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[No audio]

WATER RESOURCES (PREVENTION OF POLLUTION BY SEWAGE FROM BOATS) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2025

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

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to lay before this Honourable House, earlier today, the Water Resources (Prevention of Pollution by Sewage from Boats) Amendment Regulations 2025, made pursuant to the Water Resources Amendment Act 2024.

Mr. Speaker, these regulations are part of this Government's ongoing commitment to protecting Bermuda's environment and preserving the health of our marine ecosystem. Our waters are a precious natural resource, central to our way of life, our economy, and our national identity and therefore it must be our collective responsibility to ensure they remain clean, safe, and vibrant for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments strengthen the existing 2018 regulations, which prohibited sewage discharge from boats within 500 metres of the shore and in enclosed waters such as Hamilton and St. George's harbours. Since those rules came into effect, we have made progress but accept there is still more work to do.

Mr. Speaker, recent monitoring has shown, at times, elevated levels of bacteria in popular boating and swimming areas, particularly where boats tend to raft up during the warmer months. These levels are sometimes linked to illegal sewage discharge. With that said I want to be clear on this point, our waters remain safe for swimming. These regulations are about staying ahead of the problem and preventing long-term harm to both human health and marine life. In addition to potential health concerns, pollution in shallow and enclosed waters contributes to environmental stress especially when warmer temperatures lead to low oxygen levels. These conditions increase the risk of fish kills and can damage sensitive marine ecosystems.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment regulations now in effect will strengthen our enforcement capabilities in several key ways.

First, boat operators, particularly those entering Bermuda from overseas, will now be required to maintain and submit discharge records. This will help authorities ensure compliance with the law and track discharge practices more accurately.

Second, the regulations authorise designated officers, including members of the Bermuda Police Service, the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard, and trained public officers appointed by the Minister, to board vessels where there is reasonable cause to suspect a breach of the law.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these designated officers will not be authorised to board these vessels without reasonable cause and these inspections must take place during reasonable hours and with proper identification. Officers will be permitted to examine discharge systems, review records, and use inert dye tablets to help identify illegal sewage dumping.

Mr. Speaker, I must emphasise that this is not about harassing boaters. It is about holding accountable those who choose to pollute our waters and ensuring everyone plays by the same rules. Since the original 2018 regulations came into effect, there has been just one successful prosecution. That case involved a visiting yacht that emptied its sewage tanks in broad daylight near King's Square in St. George's. The fine was $8,000. However, under the new regulations, the maximum penalty has now been more than doubled to $20,000, sending a clear message that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that these new rules do not apply to larger vessels, such as cruise ships and commercial ships, as they are covered under Merchant Shipping regulations that are administered by the Ministry of Transport. Our focus is on smaller vessels, especially pleasure boats and visiting yachts, that may otherwise fall through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will continue to take bold, practical steps to protect Bermuda's natural resources. These changes are just one part of our broader plan to prevent water pollution. In the coming weeks, I will bring forward additional regulations to address pollution risks in our public water systems and underground aquifers.

Finally, I want to remind the boating public to never discharge sewage within 500 metres of the shoreline or within enclosed harbours. Please use designated pump-out facilities when available. And make sure the Government-issued educational sticker is clearly placed near your boat's toilet, so everyone on board is aware of the rules.

Mr. Speaker, these regulations are not about punishment—they are about responsibility. Protecting our waters is something we must all take seriously. By working together, we can ensure that Bermuda remains one of the most beautiful, healthy, and sustainable island environments in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning will be from the same Minister.

We will go on to his second Statement.

SUMMER, PREPARING BERMUDA FOR

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide Honourable Members, and the country, an update on just some of the works the Ministry of Public Works and Environment have been doing in preparation for the summer.

As Bermudians and visitors prepare to enjoy all that summer in Bermuda has to offer from the Cup Match celebration, to beach days and vibrant community events, the Ministry remains focused on a singular goal: ensuring our public spaces, coastal areas, and infrastructure are ready to support a safe and enjoyable season for us all.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our beaches and coastlines are some of the most treasured parts of this Island. As such, I am proud to report that we have completed the long-overdue restoration of Achilles Bay, a beach rich in history and memory for the eastern community.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jache Adams: Years of erosion and storm damage had made this gem nearly inaccessible but today, thanks to a local contractor and the creative contributions of a local artist, the path to the beach is once again accessible, safe, and welcoming.

Building on that success, we are now undertaking the revitalisation of Sandys Dock—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: —a site of great community value along North Shore in Devonshire. Like Achilles Bay, it had suffered from years of disrepair, but now we are hard at work restoring it to a condition that the neighbouring community remembers and deserves.

Mr. Speaker, these restoration efforts go hand in hand with our broader efforts to ensure the safety and cleanliness of our beaches. That is why I am also pleased to share that the Ministry has ordered a brand-new tractor, due to arrive on Island next week. This vital piece of equipment will assist with both beach cleaning and the grass cutting of large fields, helping us maintain the quality of our public spaces as activity increases during the summer months. And it's not just about how our beaches look, it's about how safe they are as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that our seasonal lifeguards have returned and are stationed at our most popular beaches: Horseshoe Bay, Turtle Beach, Clearwater, and John Smith's Bay. These lifeguards will soon be supported by highly trained and experienced consultant lifeguards, as it is crucial that we, as a Government, do our part to ensure that our beaches are not only beautiful, but safe for both locals and visitors alike.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting that in anticipation of the hurricane season, shoreline restoration efforts will begin this month at Southlands to protect coastal areas that are vulnerable to storms. We must be proactive as the environmental and financial cost of waiting until after a disaster is far greater than taking preventative action now.

Mr. Speaker, our road repaving also continues, as we are finishing up the work in St. George's having covered from Rose Hill to the entrance of Ferry Reach just in time for Cup Match—

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Jache Adams: —and soon we will be heading towards Flatt's Village to complete the work that had been previously started.

Mr. Speaker, I should also mention that recent concerns have been raised by members of the public, particularly from faith-based groups, about whether religious gatherings are permitted in our national parks. I wish to state categorically that to date, no formal request for a religious event has reached my desk and has ever been denied under my watch. The [Bermuda] National Parks Act speaks to what is and is not permitted within our national parks and the path for exemptions. I encourage any church or organisation that wishes to host an event at any of our national parks to contact the Parks Department, state their intent, and they will be supported accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, whilst on the topic of Parks, I am also pleased to state that in May of this year works were completed to install brand new playground equipment at Dark Bottom [Playground] in St. David's. This included a new swing set, jungle gym, new benches and coconut palms planted around the surrounding area. And our work does not stop there as next week we are scheduled to begin similar works at the Shelly Bay playground.

Several Hon. Members: Yes!

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, whilst we celebrate this progress, we must also acknowledge where improvement is needed. The state of several public bathrooms, for example, remains a concern. Work is underway to improve these facilities; however, I think it is important to accept this as an example that there is still a lot more to do.

Mr. Speaker, whether we are talking about restored docks, cleaner and safer beaches, improved shoreline resilience, or new playground equipment, our efforts all serve one purpose: preparing Bermuda for the summer and for the future.

I want to thank the men and women of the Ministry of Public Works and Environment. Their dedication is seen, felt, and greatly appreciated. And most of all, I want to thank the public for their patience and understanding as we carry out this important work. I know that at times this has not been easy. But we have and will continue to make progress.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM—BUILDING A THRIVING ONE IN BERMUDA

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with immense pleasure to announce a pivotal initiative that underscores this Government's unwavering commitment to fostering economic growth and empowering our people: the development and implementation of a comprehensive National Entrepreneurship Strategy (NES) for Bermuda.

This strategy is not merely a policy document; it is a blueprint for a future where Bermudian businesses can not only survive but truly thrive; creating jobs, driving innovation, and contributing to a more diversified and resilient economy. We are committed to building an entrepreneurial ecosystem that provides every Bermudian with the opportunity to pursue their business aspirations with confidence and success.

Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone of Bermuda's National Entrepreneurship Strategy will be the globally recognised UN Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework. This robust framework provides a holistic and

systematic approach to understanding and nurturing the complex interplay of elements essential for a dynamic entrepreneurial landscape.

The UN framework emphasises several important elements, including but not limited to

- supportive policies and regulations;
- access to finance;
- culture;
- human capital;
- markets;
- infrastructure and support services;
- networking and collaboration.

This comprehensive approach, grounded in the UN framework, ensures that our strategy addresses all facets of the entrepreneurial journey, from idea generation to scaling up.

This initiative is a direct reflection of our commitment, highlighted in the Economic Development Strategy, to prioritise fostering entrepreneurship as a key driver of our economic future. We recognise that small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of our economy, and we are dedicated to providing the support they need to flourish.

To ensure the National Entrepreneurship Strategy is robust, truly reflective of Bermuda's unique needs, and built on the collective wisdom of our community, the Ministry of Economy and Labour, in collaboration with the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation (BEDC), has engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Limited (PwC) to support us in its development. PwC's expertise will be invaluable in guiding this crucial process.

Stakeholder engagement is essential in the strategy's development. The Ministry and the BEDC are actively seeking input from a diverse array of stakeholders. This will include, but will not be limited to

- entrepreneurs;
- subject matter experts;
- investors;
- financial institutions;
- entrepreneur support organisations;
- government departments;
- quangos; and
- ecosystem builders.

We will engage with stakeholders using a variety of methods such as surveys, focus groups, collaborative meetings, and individual deep dives. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current business landscape, identify barriers to growth, and gather innovative ideas for overcoming these challenges.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I extend a direct invitation to all Bermudians who are key stakeholders in our entrepreneurial ecosystem to participate in this vital process. Your insights are critical as we capture a comprehensive picture of the Island's current entrepreneurial ecosystem and work to build a robust strategy that will guide the growth of entrepreneurship in Bermuda.

To support the development of Bermuda's first National Entrepreneurship Strategy, I kindly invite you to complete a brief survey no later than 5:00 pm, Monday, 28 July 2025. The survey will be live today. Information about the survey and the link to complete it can be found on the Bermuda Government's Bermuda Citizens Forum webpage [https://forum.gov.bm]. This survey should take you no longer than 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, we are confident that by working together, we can unlock Bermuda's full entrepreneurial potential and build a future of prosperity for all.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

GOOGLE'S SUBSEA CABLE PROJECTS AND BERMUDA'S ROLE AS A DIGITAL ATLANTIC HUB, UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, in 2022, Bermuda took a bold and deliberate step to attract Google and its first cable Nuvem, a transatlantic subsea cable linking South Carolina to Portugal via Bermuda. Such a bold step, under the leadership of former Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, the Hon. Walter Roban, was taken with measured intentionality and vision. This relationship materialised due to a firm policy approach grounded in long-term strategy, infrastructure readiness, and the belief that small jurisdictions can play a major role in shaping the global digital economy.

Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to build on that established relationship and confirm that Bermuda will again serve as a critical node in global digital connectivity. Yesterday, on July 9, Google announced a second transatlantic cable, named Sol, the Spanish word for "sun." This cable will connect Florida to Spain, transiting through Bermuda and the Azores, and will serve as the only direct in service fibre-optic connection between Florida and Europe.

Mr. Speaker, importantly, this second cable confirms that Bermuda has a deliberate choice and has been a deliberate choice based on our regulatory clarity, technical preparedness, and geographical relevance. Google's further investment in our shores, through the establishment of Sol, signals that our jurisdiction is one of trust, regulatory certainty and sound governance.

Mr. Speaker, Seagrass Services Limited, Google's subsidiary in Bermuda will, pending final approval from the Department of Planning, construct a landing station at the Southside, St. David's supported by our community. The landing station will be capable of accommodating up to four subsea cable fibre optic cables, effectively positioning Bermuda as a permanent fixture in the global network routing architecture. Sol

will strengthen Bermuda's resilience. It will link the new Nuvem system to provide unprecedented transatlantic redundancy

Mr. Speaker, what is clear to me, is the fact that Bermuda is no longer speaking in hypotheticals and an aspirational manner regarding digital diversification. We have evidenced the fruits of our tangible and successful groundwork. Groundwork that has been laid with forward-leaning policy, transparent processes, and inter-agency coordination. Google has made Bermuda a repeat partner and is supported by its standing as one of the world's most consequential technology firms. And, Mr. Speaker, we should be equally clear that this is only the fruit of good governance, good policy and good legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Google's town hall [meeting] held on June 17, 2025, in St. David's is further proof of the company's commitment to our communities. Their outreach efforts have been inclusive, informative, and well received. At the session, Google reaffirmed its intention to

- diversify Bermuda's legacy economy;
- support the development and training of local talent; and
- drive climate-positive innovation in partnership with Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement comes at a time when global economic environment is rapidly shifting, developing faster than traditional sectors. The Government of Bermuda understands that securing relevance in that economy requires us to move beyond slogans and promises and demands that we redouble our efforts to facilitate physical infrastructure, establish credible regulation, and earn the trust of notable public institutions. Today we celebrate the delivery of all three of those aims. Mr. Speaker, there is undoubtedly economic significance in this relationship. But more importantly there are strategic advancements that must not be overlooked. Advancements in how and what Bermuda is known for.

Through our relationship with Google, we will demonstrate a strategic evolution. Mr. Speaker, it is an evolution and investment in our future. A future where Bermuda moves from being simply known for insurance or tourism, and it entrenches its role and reputation in the digital economy. This economy, Mr. Speaker, that is the digital backbone that powers financial systems, health networks, AI services, digital finance and international research. It is shaping how we interact in this world. It is shaping how data moves, how systems interconnect and how innovation is delivered. This same cable that joins its sister cable will carry cloud traffic, provide expanded capacity for our local providers, and deliver AI models across the Atlantic. It will bring Bermuda along with it and will now also route through St. David's. Mr. Speaker, this is a tremendous accomplishment. An accomplishment that all of Bermuda can be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members I am going to seek your indulgence at this moment. There are two further Statements, one was overlooked earlier because the Minister was detained elsewhere at the moment. And the second, was not on the Order Paper. So, I am going to seek your indulgence. The one that was not on the Order Paper from the Minister of Transport [was] in reference to the ferry situation. I think he would like to present that. And then we would have the Minister do the earlier Statement. Minister?

PINK FERRY ROUTE UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to provide this Honourable House an update, an important update, on the status of the Pink Route Ferry Service which falls under the remit of the Department of Marine and Ports Services' team. This route, which serves the Paget and Warwick communities, plays a vital role in our public transportation network across the harbour. In recent weeks, the service has faced growing operational challenges due to the mechanical concerns stemming from an ageing fleet. I would like to share the current status and steps underway to resolve the matter, and our plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of ferry services in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday I met with the team at the Department of Marine and Ports Services, including members of the ferry crew from the Paget/Warwick route, to review the current status of the Pink Route Ferry service. Our discussions focused on the condition of the fleet, operational safety, and the wider challenges of managing an ageing marine infrastructure. It was an open and constructive conversation that reflected a shared commitment to safe and dependable ferry transport. The meeting reinforced how important it is to maintain strong communication between frontline staff, management, as well as the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's 90-minute session brought together ferry masters, engine drivers, deckhands, engineers, tradesmen, and a supervising officer—the very people who keep this service afloat. The crews voiced their concerns regarding the vessels' condition of operational limitations that they face. Despite these challenges, they reaffirmed their dedication to serving the public with consistency and care. Their professionalism, their passion, their pride in their roles were clear throughout the conversation. One crew member said it best, Mr. Speaker: *It is important to serve people, not just serve, but serve with quality!*

Mr. Speaker, the ferries operating this route the *Georgia,* the *Corona,* and the *Coralita,* are all 37 years old, well beyond their intended 30-year design lifespan. As a result, we are seeing more frequent mechanical issues. We are seeing increasingly complex repairs. These vessels require thorough inspection and maintenance to remain in service. This situation highlights the

urgent need for targeted investment in fleet renewal and maintenance to keep the public ferry system running safely and reliably.

Mr. Speaker, due to safety concerns, the Pink Route service has been temporarily suspended for two weeks and is scheduled to return on July 25. The pause allows our teams to carry out essential repairs and safety checks. While we understand the inconvenience that this may cause, public safety must always come first. We cannot and we will not compromise on that principle.

Mr. Speaker, when service resumes, the Pink Route will operate on a reduced weekday commuter schedule. This will help us strike the right balance between public access and the need for ongoing vehicle maintenance. Weekend service will remain suspended for now to provide our technical teams with the time and the space needed to complete deep maintenance, conduct safety testing, and ensure full compliance with regulatory and [safety] standards.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the ferry crews, the engineers, technical support and the leadership at Marine and Ports for their steadfast dedication, their tireless efforts during this challenging period. These public officers work hard under pressure and often behind the scenes to keep this element of our public transportation service running. Their efforts not only ensure passenger safety but uphold public trust in the reliability and integrity of our marine services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the other indulgence is for the Minister of Cabinet [Office and Digital Innovation] to read the second Statement that was not done earlier.

Minister.

BANNERS AND SIGNS, ADDRESSING THE USE OF

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

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, there has been an increasing public debate about the proliferation of banners, posters, and roadside advertisements across Bermuda. These displays, whether promoting community events or commercial ventures, have generated many opinions. Some view them as effective tools for reaching audiences, while others see them as visual clutter that negatively impacts neighbourhoods and public spaces. Previously, when asked about this matter, I indicated that we were investigating it. Today, I wish to provide this Honourable House and the public with more details on how we will proceed.

Mr. Speaker, the regulations governing signage date back to 1911, with the most recent updates in 1989. It is no exaggeration to say that, if enforced strictly, these rules would ban much of what is common today, including numerous signs and displays on buildings, sidewalks in the City of Hamilton, along roadsides, and commercial vehicles. This has resulted in a situation wherein enforcement has not been consistent and [is] out of date. While roadside banners have prompted this discussion, it is evident that signage used for commercial reasons must also be addressed.

To support this, over the past few weeks my Ministry has started collecting data to better understand the extent of the issue. We are gathering information on where banners are most frequently found and who the regular users of roadside advertising are. Let me be clear: This is not about blaming anyone. It is about understanding the environment so we can create a fair and modern solution.

Mr. Speaker, the feedback that we have received has been consistent: The current system does not work. Enforcement alone cannot resolve the underlying problem. Updating the legal framework is essential. I wish to inform the public that this Government will carry out a structured and transparent process to create revised signage legislation that aligns with the needs and expectations of a modern Bermuda. Our approach will include:

- Targeted stakeholder meetings with event organisers, promoters, businesses, and community groups that frequently use banners and signs. These discussions will allow us to share our findings, highlight the risks of the current approach, and hear directly from those most affected about what a workable framework should look like.
- A public consultation period following these meetings, so all Bermudians can provide their views, including residents, business owners, and anyone concerned about the appearance and safety of our shared spaces.

We have already received helpful suggestions, such as creating designated signage zones, setting clear time limits, offering digital alternatives, and establishing consistent and proportionate enforcement. All of these ideas and more will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, to support this process, next week we will be setting up a dedicated page on the www.forum.gov.bm, the Bermuda Citizens Forum. This online platform makes it easy for Bermudians to read about proposals, post comments and share ideas. It also allows you to see other peoples' suggestions and participate in an open discussion. I encourage all interested parties to visit the forum and contribute their ideas once the page is live. Our aim is to shift from reactive enforcement and complaints to a modern, practical, and collaborative approach. By collecting reliable data, engaging stakeholders, and inviting the wider public to participate, we will develop a new legislative system that is fair, transparent and enforceable.

Mr. Speaker, this is not merely about responding to complaints. It is about ensuring Bermuda's laws are fit for purpose—supporting cultural and economic

activity while protecting the character and beauty of our Island.

I thank everyone who has already shared their thoughts and ideas. And I look forward to collaborating with them and the wider community as we progress this important work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, this is the second Friday of the month, which means we have the Premier's questions added to our Question Period. And we will now go into that session for this morning.

Premier, Members have indicated they have questions for you this morning. And the first questions will come from the Opposition Leader. We will now start the clock.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, honourable colleagues. Good morning, listening audience.

QUESTION 1: INDEPENDENCE OF BERMUDA

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, independence has long been enshrined in the Progressive Labour Party's constitution and is repeatedly referenced by this Government, as recently as the last sitting of this Honourable House and in this Honourable House. So, it is clear that independence is in front of mind for this Government. Yet it was excluded from the 2025 Election Platform and the public has yet to see any roadmap, costings or consultation.

So, I ask the Honourable Premier, what is this Government's actual plan to take Bermuda independent, including on what democratic mandate it claims to act?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was not expecting that question today. I was expecting something else.

I know the Honourable Member was—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: What did you say?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Okay, that is fine.

I know that the Honourable Member was not in the House of Assembly last week during the motion to adjourn, but we had a discussion that was based around matters that related to the comments from the Honourable Member, the Learned Member from constituency 20, speaking about the extension of status grants. My comment there was to remind everyone of the long-standing position of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party (which I inherited as Leader, which you would be well familiar with), that the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party's policy is against the grant of status until Bermuda is able to confer citizenship as a sovereign nation. That was the position that was laid out.

Insofar as matters related to transitions to independence, sovereignty, as I call it, there are no current plans for that. You would know that, Honourable Opposition Leader. But we are happy to have that conversation, discussion, and if the Opposition wants to engage, if they actually believe that the issue is so important of the extension of status rights of PRCs, I say let us have a broader discussion and conversation on this particular issue. If that is something that you feel is important, then let us have that discussion.

The Speaker: Supplementary or a second question?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Maybe the Honourable Premier can clarify. So, it is crucial to the constitution, to his party's constitution, to proceed on independence, or sovereignty, as he says. He mentions it frequently enough that it is a fallback position, and yet the Honourable Premier has no plan regarding sovereignty in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: That seemed more of a statement than a question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, it did.

Hon. E. David Burt: But, let me—

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Happy to clarify the question.

The Speaker: Yes, if you can put a question piece on there.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, yes.

Can the Honourable Premier please confirm that he has no plan?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: He is getting a little better, Mr. Speaker. He is getting a little better.

Oh, don't worry. You're welcome.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Here is the thing, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Opposition Leader made an assumption getting up from the conversation. This is nice, a little bit of political cut and thrust. You know, he is wearing a red tie, he is getting into it.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government will state what it plans on doing in an Election Manifesto or a Throne Speech. I know the Honourable Member has not heard any mention of sovereignty in Throne Speeches and/or Election Manifestos.

Yes, it has been the long-standing view of the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party, but if you would like me to quote from the constitution, I will do my best [from] memory. It says to make sure that we put in place the preconditions for Bermuda to take its place as a sovereign state or an independent country. That means that you need to continue to develop. That means that you need to continue to educate. And that means that you need to continue to expand our global reach. Which, Mr. Speaker, is precisely what it is that we are doing.

So, I understand the line of questioning, where it is coming from. I understand that this is a big issue for the Opposition, and I am happy that they feel like engaging on this particular matter.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, we hear all of it.

But here is the point, Mr. Speaker: The point is the statement I made at the last sitting of the House is the statement of the Progressive Labour Party policy. And if the Honourable Members wish to engage on the issue of the expansion of status to PRC holders, they must do so recognising our particular position and happy to engage in that conversation. If they are not, then we know what they are. They have not changed. They are just there to go ahead and put forward the number-one thing of, what is it? Status for PRC holders.

The Speaker: Supplementary. Second supplementary or new question?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Absolutely. Second supplementary, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I believe that significant constitutional change is in the interest of all Bermudians, not just those in the Opposition. Most especially, given the Premier has admitted that he has no plan, then can he at least commit to publishing a White Paper and holding a binding public referendum before any further steps are taken towards independence?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely certain where this straw man that he has constructed has come from. Let us be very clear: If we were ever to make that step, we would go through all of this process and have a full debate in this House. But he is just now, you know, making things up.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Second question. You have used all your supplementaries.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Second question, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Yes, we are making things up in the form of questions. That's what questions are.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA'S POPULATION DECLINE

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, this Government has acknowledged that Bermuda's population is too low to sustain economic growth and quality of public services. Yet, despite publishing reports on emigration and ageing, there has been no meaningful strategy or measurable policy outcome or shift in public opinion.

I ask the Honourable Premier, what specifically has this Government done to reverse Bermuda's population decline, and can the Premier point to a single tangible success?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, on the issue when it comes to population, it is almost like, I feel like we are discussing motion to adjourn last week.

But let us be clear. The Opposition's position is, *the granting of status to PRC holders will expand the population*. That, Mr. Speaker, is a falsehood which we have stated on numerous occasions.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: On the matter . . . Mr. Speaker, I will wait until they want to hear it.

The Speaker: I hear you, go ahead. Go on.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go on, you can talk to me. You can talk to me. They'll lose out on not getting the answer. You can talk to me.

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

Because if they asked the question, I thought they wanted to hear the answer.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I will take the answer. I'll take the answer. Come on.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Just wait. Let them calm down.

The Speaker: No, no, no, please answer the question.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to go, Mr. Speaker, but there is too much chirping over there for me to focus. I want them to hear what I am saying.

The Speaker: Go on.

Hon. E. David Burt: Because I have said it many times and it seems they do not get it.

An Hon. Member: They don't want to hear it.

Hon. E. David Burt: The way to increase the population of persons who are living in Bermuda is to increase the number of jobs that are available in Bermuda. You cannot just bring 4,000 people, drop them on Front Street and say we have increased our population. Those persons do not have anywhere to work.

Our measures that are related to tangible solutions, Mr. Speaker, tangible progress of which we have made, the Honourable Minister for Economy and Labour has published his particular plan. We have implemented—key point—immigration reform on mixed status families, et cetera, to ensure that persons can stay and do not have to leave. Key point.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we talk about matters related to economic investment certificates which have brought more persons and investors here on Island. In addition to the expansion, as we have laid out for PRC rights to ensure that persons do not leave, can remain and can invest, Mr. Speaker. Those are tangible matters.

But the other tangible matter, Mr. Speaker, is that we continue to attract jobs and investment to this country. The reason why there is the highest number—the highest number—of Bermudians employed in international business is due to the sound management of this Government.

The fact that we are now seeing a hotel that is ready to open—

An Hon. Member: Aah! Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: —that is going to add additional jobs into this economy is something else that we are doing, Mr. Speaker. We see construction projects that are happening throughout this country, and we see continued investment. The way to increase the working population, Mr. Speaker—key point: working population—is to increase the number of jobs in the economy. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what we are delivering on.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Supplementary or third question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary, please, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Honourable Premier for reiterating time and time again the same policies that took place years ago, and he has taken plenty of credit for them. Why don't you show us how much the population is going up based on those policies?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am happy to publish the statistics that are available, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Second supplementary or third question?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Second supplementary or third question?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Second supplementary, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Given that the Government's own commission's study on emigration found that Bermudians were leaving due to higher living costs, poor governance, limited career opportunities and deteriorating quality of life, and these are all under the Premier's remit, does the Premier at least accept that his Government's failure to address these conditions is directly driving Bermudians away?

Hon. E. David Burt: I do not.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Third question?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Third question, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 3: CARICOM MEMBERSHIP TERMS

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just told this Honourable House that the Government is pursuing full membership in CARICOM and that CARICOM's Secretariat will shortly provide Bermuda with the legal, financial and treaty considerations for doing so. Yet, Bermudians remain unconvinced.

I ask the Honourable Minister, will the Government commit to presenting those CARICOM membership terms to the public and to this Honourable House before entering any formal negotiation, thereby guaranteeing that no final decision will be taken without a full public vote and parliamentary approval?

An Hon. Member: Here, here!

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, what I can state is that we will get the draft membership agreement. It is certainly something that we will share with this Honourable House, and it will certainly [be] something that we can vote on in this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary number one?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, first supplemental. Actually, it is a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker, or point of order.

The Speaker: Go.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I asked about a referendum or public vote.

The Speaker: Just put it in a supplementary question.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: It was in the first question.

Hon. E. David Burt: No, it was not.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, it was, I have it right here: ". . . [will be] taken without a full public vote or parliamentary approval?"

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You can restate it, because you don't have a point of order in questions. You can restate it.

Hon. E. David Burt: It was a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: No, no, no. It's not a supplementary, Mr. Premier. And that "no final decision will be [taken] without a full public vote and parliamentary approval?"

An Hon. Member: There we are!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Yes, he answered.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: The point, I believe the Premier said *parliamentary approval*. He did not say a *public vote*.

The Speaker: Do you want you want him to respond now?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I want him to answer the question, Mr. Speaker, [which] was, "without full public vote." Full public vote. It's English, right? I am speaking English.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Okay.

An Hon. Member: You're taking [up] your time; ask a supplementary.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: All right. Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I will put the supplementary. I knew that he did not get to that point, Mr. Speaker, so my supplementary is, will the Premier reference forthcoming information coming on financial matters? Can he confirm whether that will include any potential financial contributions, shared liabilities or obligations under CARICOM's collective measurements? And will that data be tabled in this House for scrutiny?

I can repeat the question for clarity.

The Speaker: No, no. No, you're fine.

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, that is what full public consultation is.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have a second supplementary?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, second supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to hear the Premier's committing to all of these data points, which we will ensure that he actually does.

Mr. Speaker, concerns around freedom of movement, immigration control and treaty obligations have not been formally addressed. Will the Premier confirm that Bermuda will retain sovereign control over immigration policy and will any proposed exemptions or opt-outs from CARICOM protocols be made public before negotiations advance?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda, as all CARICOM countries, remains sovereign when it comes to matters related to immigration. So, the answer to the question is yes.

And will we publish and discuss all these matters? The answer is yes. That is what full public consultation is. But until we receive the items, then we cannot start that consultation. I understand that the Honourable Member is very excited because he wants to make sure that we deepen our relationships with our Caribbean partners. And I can assure the Honourable Member that we will share the information so that we can have that full public discussion in this Honourable place.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Leader, you have had your quota of questions for this morning.

The next question is from MP Smith, Linda Smith.

QUESTION 1: SOUTHLANDS PARK AMENITIES, DEVELOPMENT OF

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Honourable Premier.

My question is around Southlands and what consideration and data has been taken into consideration in guiding the Government's recent planning applications for the development of Southlands Park amenities, including a zip line facility on the north side, a cafe, parking area for cars, cycles, minibuses and taxis, public restrooms and beach access, improvements on the south side?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the planning process allows us to examine these things. We believe that it is important to develop amenities in certain places as we want to make sure that we have more economic activity in this country. I think the Opposition has just asked about what we are doing to increase the working population. And the way to increase the working population is to make sure that tourists and visitors, as we are expecting more, have more activities and different things to do. [Everything] will be done in an environmentally responsible way and we look forward, *we look forward*, to public consultation on this, as it is with any planning application, for these particular matters to advance.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do. Are there any arrangements, or have there been any discussions, with a cruise line or cruise lines for the use of Southlands Beach and the new facilities that are being proposed in those planning applications?

Hon. E. David Burt: Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, but I am happy to ask the Honourable Member to speak to the Minister responsible to ask that question. But not to my knowledge.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do. According to the information contained in one of the two applications, a key offering of the proposal is a public-private partnership for the development of the zip line facility. What is the cost to the taxpayer for these planned amenities—the zip line, the restaurant and the beach improvements, please?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have not been made aware of any government financing that is going towards this particular matter. But as I said, the Honourable Member is asking a very specific question. Something that is not particularly under my remit as the Premier of the country. So, I would encourage her to speak to the Minister responsible for Public Works and/or the Minister responsible for Tourism.

I think maybe we will have a Tourism Investment Order going on it, but I will endeavour to make sure that she gets information if she places those questions to Ministers. I am sure the Ministers will answer, but I do not know of any budgetary allocation requests which need the Minister of Finance to go forward and support these particular matters.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is your quota this morning. Thank you.

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you.

The Speaker: The next Member who has a question this morning is the Government Whip. Government Whip.

QUESTION 1: COMMUNITY AND SPORTING CLUBS, GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, the budget spoke a lot about the investment this Government is making in vital initiatives. I was particularly happy to hear about the new support for community clubs. Could the Honourable Premier advise how the government will support our community and sporting clubs in this year's budget? Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer the Honourable Member, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. In this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, the Government has allocated $1 million to support community and sports clubs with capital development grants to help enhance and improve their infrastructure.

But I would like to clarify one point, that this is not new support. The Government has done this before. We awarded over a million dollars in capital development grants to 23 local community clubs to assist with facility upgrades between September 2020 and March 2022. This will be a new round of those community club development grants, which of course are part of this year's fiscal year with a new budget coming into place on July 1.

Mr. Speaker, they are fully funded in this budget and the Government looks forward to continuing to support our local community and sporting clubs.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I do thank the Honourable Premier for his response, and I understand it. I have a community club in my constituency. How may they access this support?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is news today and I hope that the Opposition and *The Royal Gazette* are listening. I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that, in keeping with the Government's commitment to digital transformation, the government has now launched a new online application form for capital development grants in the confiscated assets fund. The form is now live on https://forms.gov.bm. You can go on https://forms.gov.bm right now and you can click it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: *Dit, dit, dit, dit, dit*. I know you didn't.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our local community clubs are informed of this particular item through the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, we will be sending out information to these sporting clubs inviting them to submit applications between July 14 and August 14. Awards will be assessed and awarded in September 2025 and all the information of these matters that need to be submitted can be found online. Again, Mr. Speaker, https://forms.gov.bm. Click the link for the confiscated assets fund and capital development grants.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplementary?

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity, though.

The Speaker: The next question this morning is from MP Tucker.

MP Tucker.

QUESTION 1: MERGER OF ARGUS AND BF&M

Ms. Robin Tucker: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues.

My question is, I would like to know what practical steps the Government is taking to ensure that the merger of Argus and BF&M does not lead to unsustainable premium increases, reduced access to care and greater disparity in health care for Bermudians.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for her question. I know that the Minister of Health gave a Statement on this in response to the questions of which the Honourable Member has asked. But I think that it is important to note matters of health care and private sector health care is not regulated in that fashion. So, we cannot regulate the premiums of private health care.

What the Government has done, Mr. Speaker, is to advance matters that are related to universal health care to ensure that there is a broader base of health care provision and coverage that does exist. I would also point out to the Honourable Member, insofar as the pledge in the Throne Speech of 2024, to educate the Honourable Member, that Bermuda currently has no rules, laws or regulations governing the mergers of private sector companies.

It is something that we had placed inside of our Election Manifesto. It is something that was inside of our Throne Speech. It is something the Minister of

Home Affairs is working on insofar as making sure that there is fair competition inside of our domestic market.

So, until those particular matters come into force, there are limited matters [that] the Government can do. But what I would state to the Honourable Member [is that] I hope she keeps that energy and concern, so when the Government brings matters—because what the Opposition is asking us to do is intervene inside of these particular matters—when the Government brings laws that will allow the Minister of Health to do such, I sincerely hope the Opposition will support it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Premier for his response.

What we are actually looking for is for the Government to be able to really collaborate and consult with the health care providers and the like so that everybody knows what is coming down the pipeline.

The Speaker: Is it a question or a windup for your supplementary question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: My second question *[sic]*, Mr. Speaker, is I would like to know what plans, if any, does the Government have to involve broader community stakeholders in evaluating the merger's impacts on health care equity and access.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is, I know that the Minister of Home Affairs will advance on these particular matters when dealing with unfair competition and things which may cause a distortion of the local market here in Bermuda. I am sure that there will be full public consultation on those particular matters, and I encourage the Honourable Shadow Minister to participate in that when it comes.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: This is a new question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no, no. You are only allowed one question [in Premier's Question Period].

Ms. Robin Tucker: Oh, sorry. Okay, then it is a second supplementary question then.

The Speaker: Sure.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know what channels will the government provide which are not already available to avoid people having to go on social media and put all their complaints and things there. What channels will the government—

The Speaker: Is that related to your first question? It has to be tied into the first one.

Ms. Robin Tucker: It is related to my first question as it relates to the merger of BF&M and Argus.

The Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Robin Tucker: And so, I would like to know, will the government provide any avenues for public feedback or complaints regarding changes in premiums, coverage, service quality, post the merger. Will they provide any formal channels to receive complaints in this regard as it relates to the merger and the impact that it has for Bermudians and their health care?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the Honourable Members that the private insurance system and the supplemental insurance system is not currently subject to regulation. I would even recall when matters were brought, insofar as minor regulation, they were vociferously opposed by the Opposition. Remember that.

And so, it is interesting that they now are calling for regulation intervention when they vociferously opposed measures which were brought by the Minister of Health. That would make—

Ms. Robin Tucker: Mr. Speaker, point of order. Point of order.

The Speaker: Ah . . .

Ms. Robin Tucker: My point of order is that we are not calling—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: One second. One second. I do not think the point of order is . . . let the Premier finish his [answer] and tie it in, okay? I would not take a point of order at this point.

Go ahead, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do my best to finish answering the question, Mr. Speaker.

What I can inform the Honourable Member, in response to the question of which she has asked, [is that] there is a health care regulator in Bermuda insofar as Bermuda Health Council. And if persons do have any complaints of which they wish to lodge or to share,

they can make them there. Their website is, I will say . . . Oh okay, but the Bermuda Health Council website.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Thank you. Are you fine with that one? Good.

The next Member who has a question this morning is MP Campbell.

MP Campbell, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SUGAR TAX, REPEAL OF

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you in advance, Mr. Premier.

The Government has recently completed its Cost of Living Summit. And given that the high cost of food is a key factor driving the high cost of living in Bermuda can the Premier explain why the Government has not repealed the sugar tax?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat the answer which I have given every single time on this particular thing.

This Government has reduced the sugar tax, but the Government believes that the long-term health of the population is important.

I understand and recognise that this is an issue that that party put forward in the election. I will also recognise the position that we have always stated, and I will remind the Honourable Members opposite that the Government won the election. We have reduced the sugar tax, but the long-time implications of unhealthy food and eating to escalating health care costs . . . I hear *stealth tax* over there. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the amount of money that the Government and taxpayers spend on diabetes care in this country far exceeds any amount of revenue that may be raised by the sugar tax.

It is important that we take into account the long-term impacts and effects. And I fully support the Minister of Health's continued drive to make sure that we are more well.

We are going to do more things which were launched inside of the Throne Speech insofar as tackling matters and banning industrial trans fats. We need to make sure we have a healthier population because that is the only way that we will reduce long-term health care costs.

And I will remind the Honourable Member that if we have taxes throughout the economy, those taxes in many cases and instances are to pay for an expensive health care system. And the Honourable Member would know from his time in Cabinet of the significant amount of money and subsidies that go towards diabetes care. It is important and it is something that has been shown to reduce the long-term impacts. Is it quick? No. Is it next level? Next day? No. Is it the best long-term policy to make sure that we educate and reduce persons' consumption of things which are unhealthy for them? It is, Mr. Speaker, and I fully support the Minister of Health in this regard.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Vance Campbell: Can the Premier direct us ("us" being the public), to real data supporting that we have seen a favourable impact on our health outcomes as a result of the sugar tax? Where can we find that data?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

There are two omnibus reports that have been released by the Ministry of Health, and they can be found on the website, that have shown a reduction in the consumption of sugary drinks, which is the intended view of such a tax.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Did you say drinks?

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Did he say drinks?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Given that people suffering from high blood pressure is pretty prevalent in Bermuda as well, and a key contributing or key reason behind that is salt, does the Government intend to also impose a tax on food items that have salt?

Hon. E. David Burt: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is your quota of questions.

The next Member who has questions is MP Swan.

MP Swan, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: SENIORS' PENSIONS INCREASE

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

Mr. Speaker, citizens in my constituency are used to the PLP Government increasing pensions by the rate of inflation each year. Could the Honourable Premier advise if my constituents in St. George's can expect the Government to keep that promise again this year?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, yes, yes, Opposition Whip. We are paving the roads in St. George's so we can have a smooth drive for that Cup back to Somerset.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: I know, Mr. Speaker, you will not . . . sorry, let me get to the answer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. Yes, this Government is continuing its promise to increase seniors' pensions by the rate of inflation each year, and will this year implement an increase of 2.3 per cent, which will be seen in payments made to pensioners this September. The Honourable Member, the Junior Minister of Finance, earlier today tabled the Contributory Pensions Order, and we hopefully will debate that particular matter next week.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary? I mean, your first supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Mr. Speaker, since the PLP Government has returned to office, could the Honourable Premier advise how many times seniors' pensions have been increased and the rate for those increases? Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, allow me to say this, because I can speak to the number of times. But I think it is also important for us to recognise what this pension increase, which was tabled earlier, [means]. Altogether, Mr. Speaker, 15,086 persons receive benefits under the Act. And the proposed 2.3 [per cent] increase will raise the maximum pension benefit from $1,713 a month to $1,752 a month. Overall, this means that maximum pensions will increase by $468 for our seniors this year. That is the maximum. But all pensioners will see an increase depending on their levels of contributions.

In regard to pension increases of which we have implemented, Mr. Speaker, the increase tabled today, which will be debated next week, is our seventh increase of 2.3 per cent. The cumulative effect of the increases of which we have put into place since coming to office means that maximum pensions for seniors have increased by $3,053 a year since we have returned to office.

The Speaker: Okay.

Do you have a second supplementary?

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Oops. Well, Members, that brings us to the end of the Premier's Questions. That will now lead us into the 60 minutes of the normal Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: You will note that there are quite a few written questions this morning that have been submitted. I believe there are eight such questions. And we will start with the written questions before we get to any questions from the Statements this morning.

The first this morning is a written question to the Premier from the Shadow Finance Minister and that seeks an oral response.

Shadow Minister, would you like to put your question?

Let's start the clock now.

QUESTION 1: TAX REFORM COMMISSION REPORT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please confirm for this Honourable House whether or not the Tax Reform Commission has delivered its report to the Government? Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, no, it has not.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Premier please advise this House when the Government expects the report from the Tax Reform Commissioner?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, in a letter dated 3 July 2025, the Tax Reform Commission wrote to the Ministry of Finance to confirm that they have substantially completed their work and [are] in the process of writing the reports that will share their findings and

recommendations. They will be sharing backing information throughout July, and report on July 31 before the completion of the final public report on August 22.

The Ministry of Finance has shared this letter with stakeholders, the Association of Bermuda International Companies [ABIC], the Association of Bermuda Insurers [ABIR] and Reinsurers and Bermuda International Long Term Insurers and Reinsurers [BILTIR].

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

The Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Did I hear correctly that the public should expect to see this report by 22 August? Or is that a private report to the Government?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am happy to repeat the answer. The answer is that we will share backing information throughout July and the report on July 31 with the Ministry of Finance before completion of the final public report on August 22.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That completes the Question for that one.

The next written question this morning is from MP Fahy to the Minister of Housing and Municipalities, but they are for three written [responses]. Have you received your written response?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I have. Thank you.

QUESTION 1: MUNICIPALITY OF ST GEORGE'S COMPLIANCE WITH UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House of the steps the Government is taking to ensure that Bermuda complies with UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Municipality of St George's?*

QUESTION 2: BERMUDIANA BEACH RESIDENCES OCCUPANCY RATE OF 94 UNITS AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the occupancy rate of the 94 units as at 30 June 2025 at Bermudiana Beach Residences (broken down by each size of apartment i.e. studio, one bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom), and what is the expected timeline for full occupancy?*

QUESTION 3: BERMUDIANA BEACH RESIDENCES STATUS OF FINALISATION OF ALL PLANNED AMENITIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the status of the finalisation of all planned amenities at the Bermudiana Beach Residences such as the restaurant and spa and the anticipated costs of same?*

The Speaker: Thank you.

We will move on. The third written question this morning is from MP King to the Minister of National Security, and this requires an oral response, it is a single question.

MP King, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: HM CUSTOMS DOCK ON ORDNANCE ISLAND

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, Members of this Honourable House and the public.

Will the Honourable Minister of National Security inform this Honourable House when he was notified by his Permanent Secretary that the HM Customs dock on Ordnance Island was unsafe for use?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In answer to the Honourable Member's question, I was informed October 22, 2024.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that gun crime is a crisis that is resulting in the—

The Speaker: No. Did you have a supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: No, no. A supplementary? Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Will the Honourable Minister of National Security please inform this Honourable House how using the Paget Island boat to ferry HM Customs officials to vessels for inspection for more than a year—well, almost a year—is effectively protecting this Island?

The Speaker: I am just trying to . . . the original question was seeking the unsafeness of the Ordnance Island and your second question is related to the safety of the dock? I am just trying to tie it in.

Mr. Robert King: It is related to the safety of the dock in terms of, currently the dock cannot be used. So, Customs officials have to be ferried to the vessels for inspection. So, the question is, as a result of the dock being—

The Speaker: Okay. Because of the unsafeness of the dock, they have to be ferried out.

Mr. Robert King: Yes. That is correct.

The Speaker: That is what you are trying to ask, okay.

Mr. Robert King: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister.

Because of the unsafeness of the dock, which is the first question—

Mr. Robert King: Yes.

The Speaker: —you are asking—

Mr. Robert King: How is it—

The Speaker: —how are the staff now provided to get on to do the—

Mr. Robert King: —effectively protecting our borders by ferrying the customs officials to the vessels?

The Speaker: Ok. If the dock was safe, they would do it on land?

Mr. Robert King: Correct, because as it is right now—

The Speaker: They have to go out.

Mr. Robert King: Exactly.

The Speaker: So, his question is, Is the process of them being ferried out a safe process because they cannot come on the dock?

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

The Speaker: Yes. Okay.

A supplementary related to that?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Understanding that inspections of vessels under the current system of ferrying the officials out to the boat is happening on an infrequent and irregular basis and not all vessels are being checked. How does this protect this Island against guns and drugs? Thank you.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, the Customs officers are doing their job,—

An Hon. Member: And they are doing it very well.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —and they are doing it very well. Yes, I agree with that. And the boats are being checked as needed.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay.

That is your quota of questions for the first question. Thank you for the participation.

The next question is also a question that you have put to another Minister. Would you like to read that question out? This is for the Minister of Cabinet.

QUESTION 2: BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS UPDATE

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

Will the Honourable Minister please inform the Honourable House on the updates for progressing building permit applications at the Department of Planning? Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Planning continues to take active measures to improve the processing of building permit applications. In summary, engagement has been ongoing with key industry stakeholders to address challenges and opportunities through improved service delivery.

Internal procedures have been reviewed, and enhancements will be implemented shortly. These include stricter screening of applications to ensure basic submittal requirements are met before acceptance, the introduction of clear checklists for all permit types and more structured timelines for applicants to address deficiencies identified during review.

These measures build upon the City of Hamilton Plan that we debated and passed in this House on May 21. The streamlining actions detailed in a Ministerial Statement on May 30 and the legislative proposals that we will debate in this Honourable House later today.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: In the May 30, 2025, Ministerial Statement, 372 building permits remain open with an average age of 165 days. Supplemental: How many building permits have now been processed out of that batch?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I do believe as per the House rules, a very specific question like that should have been placed in advance. It is impossible for me to answer how many have been processed if that is not what he asked in the beginning.

The Speaker: Okay. The information is such that the Minister would not have it in his [possession].

Mr. Robert King: I will ask it a different way then, Mr. Speaker. What percentage does he estimate have been addressed?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Still, you are asking him to make a "guesstimate." And we prefer not to have him make a guesstimate; we would rather have him be more concrete with you. Okay?

All right. Okay, no further question there? Okay, thank you.

Mr. Robert King: No further questions, thank you.

The Speaker: The next question this morning is to the Minister for Cabinet [Office] from MP Ben Smith, and that required a written response to three questions.

Have you received your written responses?

Mr. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was to the Minister of Education.

The Speaker: Yes, but the Minister of Cabinet speaks on behalf of the Minister of Education.

Mr. Ben Smith: I received the answer to the first question. The second two questions have not been answered. I just want to know whether we will receive those before we break for the summer.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, he has indicated that he has received the answer to the first question. He is still awaiting the answers to the other two questions. Will you make an undertaking that he gets the answers, basically?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: We will undertake that those answers are researched and submitted.

The Speaker: Will be forthcoming? Thank you. Okay. All right. Thank you for that.

QUESTIONS: PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT STATISTICS 2017–2025

Mr. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with the number of students beginning the school year for each class of each public school from 2017 to 2025?*

Mr. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with the number of students ending the school year for each class of each public school from 2017 to 2025?*

Mr. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with the number of students that have transferred from public schools from 2017 to 2025 and which schools did they transfer to?*

The Speaker: The next question this morning is from the MP DeCouto to the Minister of Economy and Labour. There are two questions, and both require an oral response.

Put your questions.

QUESTION 1: VERTICAL FARMING INITIATIVE AND GROWY CONSULTATIONS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister for Economy and Labour please inform this Honourable House which stakeholders were consulted with regarding the BEDC vertical farming initiative with Growy and the conclusions of those consultations? Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that various private and public sector stakeholders were consulted. They consisted of local business owners, associations, government departments and quangos. The consultations in those areas are still ongoing.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, my supplemental is, was the DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] consulted and what was their view with respect to the Growy initiative? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The DENR was consulted. I believe that the dialogue and conversations are ongoing with all stakeholders and so the consultation process is not completed. So, I cannot provide the conclusion of the consultation processes.

The Speaker: Second supplementary on that, or move to the second question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplemental.

Understanding of course that the overall consultation is ongoing, perhaps the Minister could advise if the DENR has provided a specific view as to the Growy operation, and if he could share that view with us? Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important to understand that this particular initiative falls underneath the umbrella of a number of foundational economic development initiatives that we have. And so, it emanated from the Economic Recovery Plan. Underneath the Economic Recovery Plan, was the initiative of vertical farming in isolation. We then moved into the Economic Development Strategy. When we had consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the Economic Development Strategy, this item now fell under the broader strategies that we came to the House of Assembly with, and it was the integrated agriculture strategy.

The integrated agriculture strategy would actually be led by DENR. Part of that particular strategy was the utilisation of technology for assisting with the greater use of domestic food production. So, if the Member is asking whether or not DENR supports the greater use of technology for the implementation, or the facilitation—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. Point of information, I can provide.

The Speaker: Point of information? Would you like—he doesn't have to take a point . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Do you need a point of information or are you okay?

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am most particularly interested in whether the DENR supports this specific initiative with Growy, not the general topics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Hayward: There has been no objection from the DENR.

DENR is a government department, and the government department supports the initiatives that are set out [by] the Government. But what I would ultimately want to say is, we typically and generally want to put this in a framework where we are trying to increase domestic food production on Island, where we are trying to expand our agricultural sector. This is one of many initiatives designed to do that. And where you will find the specific Government support for this is in the integrated agriculture strategy, where there is a section dedicated specifically to the utilisation of technology to increase the max of food production.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Would you like to . . . that is both the supplementaries used on your first question. Would you like to do your second question now?

QUESTION 2: VERTICAL FARMING INITIATIVE AND GROWY CONSULTATIONS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House whether the BEDC or Government has provided, or plans to provide, or has discussed with Growy or its affiliates—well, simply with Growy—the possibility of providing any commercial incentives or concessions to Growy for the vertical farming initiative, and the nature of any such incentives or concessions?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, it is important to emphasise at this point that no concessions or incentives have been finalised or approved. In the deliberations between the BEDC and Growy, they have discussed possible concessions for this particular initiative.

The House will be very much familiar with the nature of the concessions, and I will just reiterate them. They are to do with customs duty and the employers' portion of payroll tax, as well as things such as expedited work permits, also and including embargoes on foreign products. And that is also in accordance with legislation that we have. Specifically, when we look at it and we look at the relief on the goods, we would say that majority of what is actually requested falls in alignment with concessions that local farmers can receive.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Appreciating the preliminary nature of the discussions, is the Minister able to provide a rough estimate of the magnitude of those concessions? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The matters have been discussed between Growy and BEDC, so I just want to make the public abundantly clear of this process.

The BEDC is a quango. They have been discussing directly these matters with Growy. The Economic Development Department has also been

consulted to determine whether or not there is Government support for a number of initiatives. None of these initiatives are actually formalised, and so it would be premature for me to state the parameters around any of the proposed concessions or the initiatives that have actually been discussed, because none have been formalised and none have been brought to Cabinet or the relevant Ministers responsible for those areas for agreement.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, is my understanding correct though, that the Government in principle would support providing these concessions, understanding that of course the Government provides the funding to the BEDC, that the Government would support using some of that funding to provide these concessions to Growy? Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Government will continue to support economic development initiatives in this country. If that means us looking to consider what concessions are appropriate, a hundred per cent, the Government will be looking to support economic development initiatives in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

That was the two questions that have been asked.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Before I move on to the next question that is down this morning, I would just like to acknowledge in the Gallery former MP Caines, he is visiting us this morning. MP? Good.

[Desk thumping]

[Question Period, continuing]

The Speaker: All right. The next written question this morning is from MP Robinson to the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

Would you like to put your question?

Oh, you have three questions, and they all require oral response. Put your first question.

QUESTION 1: RIDE-SHARING LEGISLATION

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House a comprehensive update on the progress of legislation to enact ride-sharing in Bermuda? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The ride-sharing policy has been approved by the Cabinet, and the first draft of regulations and Bill will be completed by the end of July for review and deliberation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

First supplementary. Can the Minister confirm that he has received the support and buy-in from stakeholders, concerned stakeholders, and insurance companies for these regulations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

What an excellent question. I am happy to report that I did meet as the Minister responsible for Tourism at the time with the then Minister of Transport. We have two very important stakeholders on this matter. One was the Bermuda Tourism Authority, and the other was the Bermuda Hotels Association. I am happy to report that both stakeholders are on board because they desperately are seeking an increased lift for transportation of tourists on our Island to enjoy all of the attractions that the Tourism Investment Orders are putting out, enjoy the new restaurants that are coming, and enjoy all of the new investment that this Government is putting in the space of tourism.

So, happy to report that, yes, the stakeholders are on board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? Second supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, and thank you for that answer. Yes, second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed that the one stakeholder that was not named was the stakeholder that is primarily affected by this legislation, which is the Bermuda Taxi Association. Can the Minister confirm that he has support from that particular stakeholder? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I am not sure if the Honourable MP from the other side has a list of stakeholders that I should be aware of, but I will say that in the regular course of business I meet with the Bermuda taxi owners and operators. Any matter that they bring, we always speak to them. That is a regular course of business.

So, you know, I am not sure if the list of stakeholders that he has and he talks to all the time . . . sorry,

the Honourable Member from the other side speaks with, but I do know that the Bermuda Taxi Association have long been my friends, Mr. Speaker, and I speak to them regularly. Thank you.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Those are your two supplementaries on that question. Would you like to go to your second question now?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted for clarity [to say] that I did not really hear if the Minister had the support of the—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I guess I will, why not? I guess we will call them, Mr. Speaker, how about that?

The Speaker: You can move on to the second question.

QUESTION 2: MOTOR CAR ACT 1951 BREACHES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The second question I have for the Honourable Minister today is, will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House if he has engaged TCD to investigate the alleged breaches of the Motor Car Act 1951, spoken about by concerned transport stakeholders in the media such as enforcement and illegal dispatching. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: As was pointed out in my last answer, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Honourable Member who I used to share space with in another place (I used to refer to him by another title previously, but I will not go there today), clearly he has switched his allegiance and he is talking to other media outlets. But I would like to point out Standing Order 17(5)(g)(viii) which requires that "A question shall not be asked: inquiring whether statements in the Press or of private individuals, or unofficial bodies are accurate" and therefore a response is not applicable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I understand the Standing Order. And the Member, he needs to clarify where he got his question from.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: You said, from the media?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, I did.

The Speaker: Okay, well, yes. I missed that piece, so I just wanted to ask for clarity, so we are all okay. So, we all are good.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity—

The Speaker: Just so we are okay. All right.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Okay. It was not from the media.

The Speaker: Well, you indicated it was from the media.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: *In* the media. Not *from*.

The Speaker: Okay. Yes. All right. That was your supplementary. Or that was your question?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: That was my second question.

The Speaker: Okay. Do your third question then.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Just turn your microphone on.

QUESTION 3: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, PLANS FOR POTENTIAL INCREASED DEMAND

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House if there are any plans being drafted to account for the potential increase in demand of our transportation system should Fairmount Southampton reopen as scheduled?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes. Plans are being drafted to account for the potential increase in the demand of our transportation system when the Fairmont Southampton opens. I want to also clarify at this point that when we were talking earlier about ride-sharing that this does not necessarily just affect taxis, Mr. Speaker. The ride-sharing policy only affects private cars if no taxis are available. So, I . . . maybe I will leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I heard the Minister is adding extra answers to his previous answer there. So, hopefully he will be able to confirm whether he has spoken to TCD and actually taking the concerns of the transport

stakeholders into account instead of worrying about a Standing Order.

Mr. Speaker, before I continue—

[Laughter and general uproar]

The Speaker: All right, we are always abiding by the Standing Orders.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: You worry about them.

They are excited.

They are excited,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —but when the public wants to know the answer to questions, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister also quotes that same Standing Order for the concerned public. Thank you. Because they are excited. They are excited now, Mr. Speaker, they are excited.

The Speaker: All right, put your third question now.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: All right, cool.

The Speaker: Put your third question.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, my supplementary for this question is, Is the Minister considering then, with the need for increased demand, the temporary taxi permits recommended by the industry?

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

I can say this, that the Transportation Coordinator is developing a comprehensive plan that includes an assessment of seating availability on all taxi fleets, on all minibuses and doing an analysis of daytime and nighttime usages of capacity, evaluation of the airport, cruise ship transportation needs and projections, all related to the Fairmont and its associated requirements.

And I am speaking with all stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, regarding transportation, as I think I stated in my first answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to also clarify to this Honourable House that I respect all Standing Orders that govern this Honourable House. Okay?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Just in case, because I know that it likes to get misconstrued, yes.

The Speaker: I am sure you do. I am sure you do because, you would not want to be out of line.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: That is for the record. That is for the record.

So, my second supplemental is, with the plans being drafted for the increased demand on transportation, will this Honourable House be made privy to those plans, and when will we be made privy to those plans?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I think [the] "he" is the Minister responsible for Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport. I think that is who the Honourable Member is referring to. So "he" will respond like this: That I work hard every day to serve the people of this country,—

An Hon. Member: We all do.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and we all do, yes, absolutely.

So, when we have it ready to be presented and all stakeholders who probably will call the Honourable Member right after I talk to them, once they have been informed and once we have the plan, I am sure he will jump on Twitter immediately and help to amplify the message that transport is improving in this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I believe that brings to a close the responses for your questions.

We will now move on to the next written question this morning which is from the Opposition Whip to the Minister of Home Affairs. There are three questions, all requiring written responses.

Opposition Whip, have you got your written responses?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I have them, thank you.

QUESTIONS: ROCKY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE MOU WITH GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA NOVEMBER 2018

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: *Will the Honourable Minister please disclose to this Honourable House a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding entered into between the Government of Bermuda/Ministry of Home Affairs and the Rocky Mountain Institute on or about 14 November 2018, as signed by the then Ministers responsible for Transport and Energy?*

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: *Will the Honourable Minister please disclose to this Honourable House the number of meetings held between representatives of the Rocky Mountain Institute and*

Bermuda Government Ministers and/or Permanent Secretaries since the said memorandum was signed on or about 14 November 2018 to 30 June 2025 in regard to renewable energy projects and ways to build a more resilient grid, including attendees at those meetings, dates, locations and topics discussed at same?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: *Will the Honourable Minister please disclose to this Honourable House the total costs incurred by the Government of Bermuda in attending the meetings as referenced in question (2) above?*

The Speaker: Thank you.

Okay, Members, that brings us to a close of the questions for the . . . as far as written questions this morning. We will now move on to the questions that were generated from the Statements that were read today. And the first Statement that generated questions this morning was the Premier's Statement in reference to red tape.

Premier, MP Pearman has a question for you this morning.

QUESTION 1: RED TAPE REDUCTION PROGRESS

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

I thank the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance for his Statement to this Honourable House this morning on the subject matter of red tape reduction consultation progress. With your leave, I quote from his Statement made this morning where he said, quote, "I," (being the Premier) "provided a brief overview of the Government's progress. I confirmed that since the consultation closed, the Government had launched pay.gov.bm, enabling residents to pay for parking tickets online."

[1]Is the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance aware that that online system is currently not working, up to and including yesterday?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not., but happy to look into it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary. Once the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance has had someone look into it, will a response be provided to this Honourable House or very least to the Opposition? Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: What response is he actually seeking, Mr. Speaker? Happy to provide him. He has informed me that a service is not functioning. I said I am not aware; I will look into it. And I am going to look into it by asking the Minister responsible for IDT.

The Speaker: So, the goal is you just to know it is up and running again.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Correct, Mr. Speaker. The goal would be to know and to receive a response from the Premier like, *It is fixed. It is working.*

The Speaker: All right. Okay.

Supplementary question? Any other question? No. Okay.

So, the Premier is undertaking to look into it and get it working as quickly as possible. Thank you.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement from the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors regarding the update to domestic abuse. And that question is from MP Tucker.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just jump to my question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 1: DOMESTIC ABUSE SPECIALIST—UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: Given that over the last few years there has been an increase in domestic violence protection orders, from 2022 ([there were] 91), to 2024 ([there were] 140). I would just like to know whether the Ministry has plans to add another specialist social worker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

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

We did just get this one, Mr. Speaker, which we are so very grateful for, but we also still use the services of the Centre Against Abuse. So, this is actually a complement of support providers in conjunction with the Centre Against Abuse. So, we have two.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[1] See Honourable Premier's further clarification at page 1237

Looking more future-focused, again, given the increases that are being seen and the value of the specialist skill set that they have hired for, I appreciate that the Centre Against Abuse is helping as well. But I just want to know if, future-focused, there is a plan to expand or add any other type of specialist to deal with domestic violence issues and to support domestic violence victims. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleague for that question.

I will definitely wait to hear back from the team who is currently providing the services in regard to the need for another domestic violence specialist. But I will wait for that data. Mr. Speaker, the person did just come on board as a complement to the service provider that is already providing a service, and we will make decisions from there. Thank you.

The Speaker: Do you have a second supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Minister, that brings a close to questions [on] your Statement.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Works in reference to the preparing for the summer. And the Opposition Whip has questions for you.

QUESTION 1: SUMMER, PREPARING BERMUDA FOR

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning colleagues.

On page two, the Minister states that . . . let me just get it here. I believe it is a second paragraph. "I'm proud to say that our seasonal lifeguards have returned. . . ." Great news. He then goes on to say that, "These lifeguards will soon be supported by highly trained and experienced consultant lifeguards." They will *soon* be supported. My first question really is, considering this, is the Minister saying that we are not at full complement at this point in time?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

I think it is important that we emphasise what I am really speaking to. On a normal basis, we have a certain number of seasonal lifeguards that watch our shores. That number we have currently. We are looking at expanding the fleet and ensuring that we have lifeguards all year round. That is the lifeguard consultants. Those are six individuals who we are currently in the final stages of negotiations with as well as will then complete with the immigration process. But as of right now, we have the full complement as we would under normal circumstances. I hope that answers the Member's question.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary to that just so that I can be clearer. So then are we suggesting we are going to cover more hours then by soon having these new consultants involved? When the Minister says that we are at our normal complement, then I guess I am trying to understand why we would need more. Are we expanding the hours then with these new consultants of coverage?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are expanding. Secondly, it is important to recognise that these lifeguard consultants plan to be here for the full year. The current fleet is here on a seasonal purpose. They are here to be for the . . . well, we will say, the more active summer season. But the consultants are primarily here so that we have active lifeguards on our beaches year-round. Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or new question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second supplementary, and thank you, Minister, for those answers and the clarity on that. So, when you mentioned soon, do you have an approximate idea? I do not want to lock you into an exact date because I know they are hiring consultants, but can you give us an idea?

Hon. Jache Adams: Soon. Again, it is dangerous because I do not want to give specifics. But to be fair, we believe that they will be here next month in August. We believe that the consultants will be here in August.

The Speaker: Second question or . . .

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm good.

The Speaker: You're good? Okay, thank you.

Minister, that brings an end to your questions.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Economy and Labour. MP Campbell has questions he would like to put to you, Minister.

QUESTION 1: ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM, BUILDING A THRIVING ONE IN BERMUDA

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

The Minister made a comment in his Statement about the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises to the success of our economy, and I agree. Going to the heading of his Statement, *Building a Thriving Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Bermuda*. Does the Minister believe a key component of that is having a thriving base of potential customers?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The answer to that is yes. To broaden that, what we want to do is have an ecosystem that expands the local customer base of our entrepreneurs beyond Bermuda's shores. And so, part of what we will be developing is if they can even scale up their business for global expansion as well.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Vance Campbell: Supplementary. I am glad to hear that response from the Minister, particularly about educating our entrepreneurs on expanding beyond our shores. Given our population challenges, our ageing population and the need for more working people, does the Minister believe we currently have a thriving base of potential customers?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I do believe we do have a thriving business community in Bermuda and the economic results of the economy will underpin that notion that we have a driving business community. We await the 2024 Economic Activity Survey results which will show GDP by production on an annual basis. We know that household consumption on a quarterly basis has remained resilient and healthy and that has translated obviously into them spending funds within our local business sector. And so yes, I do believe that improvements need to be made but I do believe that we are in a very positive space when we look at the economic data, when we look at household consumption, and we look at economic productivity from the annual economic activity surveys.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or new question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Given the successful rate at which people are graduating from the entrepreneurial programmes and schemes that the Minister has put in place, does he have any concern that there may end up being too many entrepreneurs for the current number of customer or potential customers that are out there, thereby making it extremely difficult for these entrepreneurs to actually succeed?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: The answer to that question is absolutely not. When I have been able to visit the incubator and accelerator programmes, I am impressed with the variety and diversity of goods and services actually provided. And so, I do not see where there is concentration in a specific area which is a cause of actual concern. What I do see is great levels of innovation and diversity and that competition allows businesses to become more innovative, to think of an idea that is not already established in our community and work on the execution of that. I am pleased that the Government has provided the necessary support through incubator accelerator programmes, through grant funding, to support entrepreneurs on their entrepreneurial journey.

The Speaker: Second question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: No. I thank the Minister for his answers. Thank you.

The Speaker: All right. Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Member.

The last Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Tourism and Transport from MP De Couto.

QUESTION 1: PINK FERRY ROUTE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am very grateful to the Minister for that information as are all of the riders of the ferry. And also, very grateful to the workers who he called out in the Statement because they have been working very hard and juggling quite a lot and making innovative use of things like WhatsApp and things like that. So, I just wanted to add to his laudatory comments. We did receive some information. Could the Honourable Minister provide an estimate of when we might hear about a longer-term solution to the reliability of the Pink Ferry route? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Those conversations are ongoing. As soon as we have information, as I have been telling the MP for the area all week every time he sends me an email, every time he sends me a message, I tell him every single time: we are working.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order. Mr. Speaker. He is, perhaps, unintentionally misleading the House.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Hey. Hey. Hey. I am answering the question.

The Speaker: He was trying to respond to your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He has, perhaps unintentionally, said some things that are not factually correct, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Have you sent emails to him, and has he responded?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He has not responded to my emails. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, I have, thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you. Let me go a little further? In the emails, in the WhatsApps, in the telephone calls—which I do answer, Mr. Speaker—I have told the MP from the area the exact same thing. I put a Statement on the House floor this morning, that when we have the information that is accurate, rather than stuff going around in, as he stated, a WhatsApp group, we will bring it to the House so the public and the individuals of which we all serve can have accurate information.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: A WhatsApp group. With statements . . . we will leave it there, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Supplementary or new question?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Has the Minister—

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Has the Minister requested his technical officers or provided them with a deadline to come back with a plan? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, contrary to statements that are made by the area MP that say I do not have high expectations, I will say this, Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the House: I have high expectations of all staff that work at the Department of Marine and Ports and I have high expectations that every single public officer that is working on behalf of the people of this country will do their very best to do what is necessary to increase the transportation efficiency of this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Second supplementary or new question?

QUESTION 2: PINK FERRY ROUTE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: New question.

You know, since the Minister was sharing private commentary, I would like to clarify that the expectations were with respect to the Minister's effectiveness. I actually have a great deal of respect for the staff who are busting their tails.

So, my second question, Mr. Speaker. Has the Ministry considered the use of other boats to provide a service while they are repairing or otherwise working on the ferries? For example, I know in the past smaller vessels have been used that perhaps have previously been used on the Dockyard route and things like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have considered that.

The Speaker: Yes?

Second supplementary? Or a third question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, supplemental.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, this would be the first supplemental for my second question.

The Speaker: Yes. Yes, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Would the Honourable Minister let us know what is the outcome of that consideration of the use of other boats? Thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I know the area MP is very well versed in the area of sailboats, but clearly the technical officers will not, and they refuse not to discuss technical advice and considerations on WhatsApp groups. So, I can tell you that based on my meetings that I had yesterday and meetings that are continuing to happen, the Department of Marine and Ports are considering all options. And if we had options that could be considered we would be running the ferry this morning. But as I said in my Ministerial Statement, we have had to temporarily suspend it until July 25 so that we can consider all other options. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary or third question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Third question, Mr. Speaker. And obviously you must understand, Mr. Speaker, that I am here in this House asking questions. I am not asking any questions on a WhatsApp.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, for those listening, these questions are in the House of Assembly.

The Speaker: Put your question.

QUESTION 3: PINK FERRY ROUTE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Can the Minister please advise the House of the nature of mechanical issues with the three different ferries available for the Pink Route? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House this: There are some things that you cannot see and there are some things that you cannot understand simply by a WhatsApp group.

So, Mr. Speaker, to answer the question of the Honourable MP: Yesterday morning, as I stated in the Statement—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I cannot even hear myself. I will sit down.

The Speaker: Let's hear it, let's go. I hear you, I hear you, I hear you. I hear you. I hear you.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: I can't hear you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that—they do not want me to answer this one—I am so glad that yesterday, as I did state in the Statement, that I did go to the Marine and Ports shop there on East Broadway. And they actually donned me with some coveralls. And I actually went down into the engine room, Mr. Speaker. There are multiple issues with the ferries, as I did say in my Statement. They include steering, they include engines. I was able to see firsthand the workers of Marine and Ports and they had the pistons out and everything else. You know, I am not going to pretend to be a boatsman.

An Hon. Member: What do you know about engines?

Hon. Owen Darrell: But I do know a little bit about fixing things, yes.

But, I will say this. There are a number of issues which I did state in my Statement that come with a fleet is as ageing as it is and we are looking at all options as to how we get this fleet and this service back to optimal performance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Let's see, where were we at? Your supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary.

Given that we have well established the ageing nature of the fleet and the broad array of issues with all of the boats, which has been well known for a long time, can the Minister advise why have no plans been made to maintain or refresh this fleet or replace it or create contingency plans? Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go ahead. Go ahead.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Well, Mr. Speaker, we could go down that road a long way because there is an airport that sits down the road that a lot of money went to, a whole lot of money. And we could have bought a whole lot of ferries, a whole lot of boats, with that money.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Owen Darrell: So I think that that is the question. We could do Morgan's Point, we could do the incinerator, we could do a lot of stuff, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: However, Mr. Speaker, *however,* the question that the MP for the area, who I think is asking why his constituents cannot get to work every single day with uninterrupted service is because maybe the Government of which . . . well, when they were the

Government, which he represents, did not do enough to invest in local infrastructure of the boats. They were more concerned with sailboats that he likes when it comes to America's Cup. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would like to ask the Honourable Minister how many ferries do you think you could buy with $200 million that we used at Morgan's Point?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this, I can definitely get the Paget/Warwick route up and running and we will fix Hinson's Island, which I think some Members may personally live on. Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: In referring to the Minister's answer, can he confirm that in the past eight years the Progressive Labour Party has not made any plans or contingency plans to address the ageing Pink Ferry route?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: [INAUDIBLE]

The Speaker: He said, is there a plan for the Government to replace the ferries, basically?

Hon. Owen Darrell: I think I answered that one earlier when I said once we come to a conclusion as to what we are going to do, we will then let the House know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Question Period.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: Hold up, hold up.

That that brings us to a close of the questions that were put.

However, MP Pearman, the Premier informed me that he does have a response to your earlier question, and he would like to update on the information he received.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I would be grateful to have that answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: Oh, you're not answering the question?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: Okay, I thought you were going to update an order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Standing Order 17(5)(c)]

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

Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 17(5)(c) states "If a question contains a statement of fact, the Member asking it shall make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement, . . ." Earlier today in this Honourable House I was asked a supplementary question on a Statement regarding pay.gov.bm regarding parking tickets and the Honourable Member said that the site is down, up to and including up to yesterday. I can confirm to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that that statement is factually incorrect.

- There were four payments processed online yesterday.
- There were nine payments processed online Wednesday.
- There were payments processed, and transactions were processed this morning.

The site is not down and there have been 2,244 payments total since inception on the 1 July 2024. And I would ask that the Honourable Member, according to Standing Orders, withdraw his question that was factually incorrect.

The Speaker: Mr. Pearman—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Speaker: —MP Pearman, the Premier has come back with the information that indicates that the system is functioning

Mr. Scott Pearman: Okay, so, if he is going to quote me, Mr. Speaker, let him quote me accurately. My question did not say that the site was *down*. My question was why the site was not working, up to and including, yesterday. There is a distinction between a site being down and a site not working.

A constituent—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Hang on, hang on, he asked me to produce—excuse me.

The Speaker: Members, let's hear it. Let's hear it. Let's hear it.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has asked me to substantiate a factual question, and I am doing so.

The approach was made to me yesterday by a constituent. I went online myself and I sought to do what the constituent indicated had not been able to be done, which is to type in into the bar the actual ticket number. It was not possible to enter in the ticket number because there was an underscore and it was not possible to type any key into the ticket number. And that was the area . . . that was the error identified to me by a constituent and that is the reason I brought this question.

I verified it myself because of course sometimes people get things wrong. And all I can tell the Premier is that my facts are correct. And as of yesterday it was not working. So that is the question. And if the Premier says that four tickets managed to be paid yesterday, I will take that answer at face value. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat. Four yesterday, nine on Wednesday, three transactions this morning. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Member attempted to embarrass me in his asking of the question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker!

Hon. E. David Burt: And, Mr. Speaker, if he wanted to state that there—

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

The Speaker: Members, Members. Members. I am going to save us going back and forth on this. I do not think any question that comes to the floor is to embarrass any Member on either side. It is to bring facts.

An Hon. Member: Absolutely.

The Speaker: It is to bring concerns of community, concerns of those who are represented, to the floor. I do not think we should take it in those terms because I do not want anyone in here to think that we come here to do personal vendettas, personal attacks, personal whatever on individuals. It is to bring information.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I take the point. And what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that if the Honourable Member wanted to explain what the challenge with the website was then he could have adequately explained that during his particular thing. It was around the question and the media response to it.

But I am happy that the hard-working public officers inside of the Ministry of Finance were listening and provided me the answers and said that the website is functional. [In] regard to the specific issue of which he has now clarified, I will go back to the persons, and I am sure the Minister for Cabinet Office and Digitalisation, in addition to the Junior Minister for Cabinet Office and Digitalisation, who is listening, will be able to provide me with additional information if the Honourable Member so wishes to get it. Thank you.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member, and I thank him for his answer, but he is [imputing] an improper motive by suggesting that I failed intentionally to clarify. I asked a question. He said he had no awareness of the answer and would look into it. I thanked him, and you directed him to respond, and I am grateful that he has.

To suggest that it was somehow a failure on my part that he was not able to find the answer he was looking for, is imputing improper motive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: His question was, *up until yesterday, it was not working*. It is clearly working.

The Speaker: Members, I had not asked us to rise 10 minutes ago, because 10 minutes ago we got to the end of the question. And we have gone 10 minutes into the extended period when we should have risen at 12:30.

Premier, I am going to ask that you rise now, and we will come back at 2:15. Okay?

Hon. E. David Burt: You want us at 2:15? Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:15 pm.

The Speaker: Members, the House now stands adjourned until 2:15 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:42 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:15 pm

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

The Speaker: Members, the House is now in session after our lunch break.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Members, before we broke for lunch, we had concluded the question and answer period, so the next item on the agenda is Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches.

Would any Member like to make a contribution?

Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

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

I would like House to extend congratulations to Bishop Lambe on his 50th year of pastoral care in Bermuda from his return in 1975 and the church on Angle Street to expanding onto North Shore with the First Church of God. His family and the working committee put together a wonderful celebration.

I would associate Minister Weeks.

The Speaker: Do the whole House.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I will associate the whole House. He is done a marvellous job, as has Elder Lambe's wife with the nursery. And it was a fantastic ceremony chaired and organised by a number of people, including Mr. Charles Jeffers and former MP Anthony Richardson.

Congratulations to Bishop Lambe. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Linda Smith, you have your—

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend congratulations to the Filipino Association of Bermuda who recently celebrated their 127th anniversary of independence. It was on June 22, and they had a really great event at Victoria Park with lots of music and lots of great food, and it was a really good time. Congratulations to them and for sharing their culture with the rest of us in Bermuda.

Mr. Cannonier would like to join?

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Linda Smith: Okay, to be associated with that. And Minister Darrell was also at the celebration, so I would imagine, as he seemed to enjoy himself, that he would like to be associated as well, even though he's not here.

But congratulations to them and thank them for sharing their culture with us. Thank you.

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

MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just take some time in my few minutes to first offer condolences. Firstly, to the family of Ms. Marcia Smith of Store Lane, Somerset. I would like to also associate MP Foggo.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: She might be from St. George's. And MP Jamahl Simmons. And I will associate all the rest of the MPs.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, growing up on Overplus Lane, which is just over from Store Lane, Ms. Smith's son, Kacey, was one of my first friends. So, it's very saddening to open the paper and see that he lost his mother recently. And myself, recently having lost my mother, I know how that pain feels. So, I would like to send condolences to the family of Ms. Marcia Smith.

Also, to the family of Ms. Patsy Pitcher of 11 Privateer Lane of Warwick. Growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and going to Warwick Church, I knew her and her husband and her son as church members. And so, I would like to just send condolences to them, especially to her son, Troy Pitcher. I have known him for a very long time, growing up. He was my pathfinder leader many, many years ago.

And, Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note, I would just like to send birthday congratulations to two of my constituents. One, Mrs. Maria Eduardo Bento Perry of 25 Paddock [Drive], who celebrated her 89th birthday on 2 July. And then also to Ms. Patricia Settle of 3 Leith Hill Lane, who celebrated her 88th birthday yesterday, Mr. Speaker. So, I'd like to send congratulations to them.

And Mr. Speaker, I always like to highlight and recognise good works done by young people. Recently, the Bermuda Pacers Track Club participated in the Flying Angels International Track and Field

Championships, and they have done Bermuda very well. I associate MP Foggo—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will associate the House, Mr. Speaker. Out of 123 teams, Bermuda finished second overall. And out of that, they finished with 53 medals, 21 gold, 23 silver, and 10 bronze medals. And also, there were seven meet records that were set by Bermudians and 22 personal best performances by our participants. So, I want to send congratulations not only just to the participants, but to the coaches, Mr. Cal Simons, and the support teams of parents and guardians that went with them.

Mr. Speaker, before my time runs out, I also just want to send congratulations again, this time to Kacey and his wife Wannita [Smith], who recently opened up The Lab, which is a bowling simulator business. I encourage people to try it out.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other Member?

MP Simmons, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to our listening audience.

I would like to join in extending condolences on the passing of Marcia Smith who was an educator, a valued, valued, valued member of the Progressive Labour Party family and the constituency 33 Sandys South team. She will truly be missed for her commitment to the children of the community, to her commitment to the party, and her commitment to her family. And I give my condolences to them.

While on my feet, I would like to finish on a positive note, and I would like to extend thanks and congratulations to the workers of Works and Engineering who have been out on the roads, restoring our roads and improving conditions there. The conditions have not been good. They have worked in sweltering heat. They have worked under very, very tough conditions, but they are to be commended for the service they are doing for our country and our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Speaker, you sprung real quick that time. You have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulatory remarks regarding Kacey and Wannita Smith. I taught them both. So, whenever you see our young Bermudians engaging in enterprising activities, you want to praise them and support them, and so congratulations to them. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to be associated with the condolences because Kacey, indeed, and Wannita. They have lost their mother. Marcia was a year behind me, both at East End and a year behind me at The Berkeley. So, I was very saddened to see that she had passed away. And so, condolences to her family, her St. George's family as well as, I guess, her family in Somerset.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a great big birthday announcement for Ms. Bernice Smith in St. David's, who will turn 100 tomorrow. I do believe the Premier will be coming out to celebrate that. Her great-nephew, I guess, sits in the House as the Opposition Leader, and so I will associate him and the Premier with this announcement. I do intend to be at that engagement, and I am sure I am going to have a whale of a time dressed in blue and gold.

I would sadly like to give condolences to the Greaves family on the loss of Linda Greaves. I would like to associate [Minister] Wayne Furbert, [MP] Kim Swan, and [MP] Vance Campbell, and [MP, Dr.] DeCouto, and [MP, Rev. Dr.] Emilygail A. Dill, and the Premier, and, I guess, other Members.

An Hon. Member: Include us all.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Certainly, she was a young go-getter, and she struggled many years with her illness, and so, even though she lived to see 70, I believe, or close to it, she made it close.

The Speaker: She was 67.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I thought she was a little bit older than that. I think she's older than her husband.

Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

She did live longer than most people would have thought. She was her daughter's best friend, her husband's best friend, and she is a great loss to the Greaves family. So, our hearts go out to her husband, Frank, known as “Bucky,” and her daughter, Sophia, who is a lawyer and is doing wonderful things in her profession. Our hearts go out to them. She buried her mother. He buried his wife today. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?

Junior Minister, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member mentioned about Bishop Lambe earlier, and I would like to be associated with Bishop Lambe, and congratulations for the service that he has given to this Island. He's been a stalwart in Bermuda. I remember in the olden days, Mr. Speaker, when in the political parties he always told me, *Wayne, go check out . . .* There were three pastors he always asked me to check out. Bishop Lambe, Goodwin Smith, and Elder Eve from the AME

Church. *Those three, go check them out, see what their opinions are, and then get back.* So, these individuals and Bishop Lambe have served this country well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also bring condolence to a cousin of mine, Dr. Juanita Esther Guishard-Packwood, formerly Furbert. She is Rommel Furbert's, Dr. Warner's aunt. She has been a stalwart in Hamilton Parish. These individuals that I have looked up to over the years, she's lived a very good life. We Furberts live a long time. I think she died at 97 or 98. Nobody good has died young. That's my concern about myself passing out one of these days. But she has done well.

Again, I would also like to be associated. I heard the Honourable Member talk about Ms. Greaves. I know her daughter very well, and we will definitely miss her and the individuals. But Mr. Speaker, thank you for this. Ah, one last thing. I know this is unusual, Mr. Speaker, but I would like for this House to send . . . I don't know how you will do it but send condolences to the families in Texas for the loss of so many lives that they have lost over these last couple weeks. I have watched that shown over and over again, and I tell you; it is heartbreaking.

Mr. Speaker, when you go and drop off a child and say . . . you kiss them and say, *I'll see you a week, two weeks,* because they are in camp, and then all of a sudden you hear about these particular incidents of waves, floods that took place in Texas, Mr. Speaker, it brings tears to my eyes. So, I hope in some way we can do it. I don't know how we'll do it. Whether it is through the US Consulate, but I think we can send some kind of condolence to those families.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to give congratulations. Oh, this afternoon.

The Speaker: We normally do this in the morning, but it is afternoon.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, I rise this afternoon to give congratulations to Ms. Chelsea Warren. Many of you will know that Ms. Chelsea Warren is the sister of the late Mr. Marco Warren, and she is the entrepreneur and owner of Uptimum Bodied, which is in the City of Hamilton. Ms. Warren and her family have recently announced that they will be selling and trying to sell 1,000 football boots that were originally designed by her late brother, Marco Warren.

So, I would like to congratulate her for completing this project, which was started by her brother before his untimely death. And I encourage all parents and footballers in Bermuda, if you can, and you prepare for the upcoming football season, to go around to Uptimum Bodied and get yourself a pink pair or a blue pair of these football boots, because the proceeds will be going to a good cause, and that is the late Marco's son. The address is in the Washington Mall on the top floor. So, congratulations to Ms. Warren. I'm sorry, forgetting the name of her sister, as well as her mom, who have definitely taken this labour of love and brought it to this point.

I would also like to send congratulations to our most recent and top-level footballer, Mr. Nakhi Wells (I don't know if someone did that already) for the signing of a new football team, Luton Town, which is, I think, just outside of London, but I think those of you that are familiar with that part of the world. And it is exciting to see, because here in Bermuda we always follow our top sportsmen, our elite athletes, as we call them. And Mr. Wells now has another jersey for Bermudians to add to their collection. And I have seen many footballers and football enthusiasts basically saying, *Yes, here's another jersey that we're going to add*. So, congratulations to him for continuing and prolonging his pro soccer career and continuing to do what those that came before him, the likes of Shaun Goater, the likes of Clyde Best, Kyle Lightbourne and others who have carried this Island across the world stage in the name of football. So, congratulations to him.

And finally, staying with the sporting theme, the Bermuda rugby team is down in Mexico, and they received their first win recently. So, I want to say congratulations to them and continued success, and they will come back with more success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Whip, you are rising or . . . Okay, Mr. [Government] Whip, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, colleagues in the radio audience.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, let me ask that condolences be sent to the family of the late Eula Thomas of Sylvan Dell. She was actually the widow of a former member of this House, Elder Austin Thomas. I would associate Kim Swan and the rest of the House, Minister Weeks as well.

She was the mother of Renee and Selena. And one of the reasons why I certainly would feel free sending these condolences, because both Mrs. Thomas, Eula, and Austin Thomas, set me on, I would think the road to success when I was in my puberty years. They were my Sunday school teachers, both of them, one after the other, at the Evening Light Tabernacle on Parsons Road. So, I certainly express condolences to the family.

The second one I would like to associate with is the passing of Linda Greaves, who was the wife of a friend of mine, Bucky Greaves, very good friend of

mine. He was a footballer as well. So, condolences to the family as well.

On a happier note, I would associate with the congratulations to this young couple, Kacey and Wannita. They are friends of my children. And I think we can never not express satisfaction with the youth of what they're doing today, because you hear a lot of bad things. And I certainly would support them in their venture as well.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like congratulations to be sent to my stepfather, Mr. Arthur "Tokey" Mills. That name may be familiar to a lot of people in the hospitality area, because they know that he was like "Mr. Reefs" as far as transportation came about. He was their main person in terms of moving their clientele around, either from the airport or back to the airport or to the beach or wherever they were going to go. And Arthur was an ambassador, a taxi ambassador extraordinaire. And he went 100 years old last week Friday. So again, I ask that congratulations be sent to him.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: MP Swan, would you like your three minutes?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow on and associate myself with those congratulations on celebrating 100 years to my friend, "Tokyo" Mills. I'm one of the few people that'll call him "Tokyo" Mills. No, because that's what my uncle told him. He said, *"Tokyo" Mills, you'll never be able to buy a set of clubs that can beat me, Herman Tucci Bascome*. So, with that little bit of laughter, Mr. Mills and I played many rounds of golf together and helped to formulate me as a young man growing up at Port Royal with many other elders. And I just want to be associated with those congratulations that he has lived a long and healthy life.

I would like for congratulations to be extended to Mr. Jarryd Dillas and Ms. Tracy Burgess being the Bermuda National Amateur Champions. Did so in the month of June at Port Royal in sweltering heat. Congratulations to them.

Send condolences to the family of [Andrew] Richard Fogden, who used to play a lot of golf at St. George's that I got to know when I moved to St. George's.

[I would like to] be associated with condolences along with MP Ming [regarding] Linda Greaves and her family on her passing. That would be part of MP Ming's family indeed.

And certainly, I would like condolences to be sent to the family of Dale Harvey, whose brother Tommy and his sister Esther passed away not too long ago, whose family I knew very well. Tommy being a member of the One Bermuda Alliance actually ran against me on two occasions. But, notwithstanding that, they are some St. George's family, part of my extended family, the Foggo family as well. And I know I don't see him here, but I'm sure MP Cannonier would like to be associated with that because that's part of his family as well. And I think MP Ming and MP Foggo certainly would be associated with those condolences as well.

And finally, I'd like to be associated with the congratulations being sent to Bishop and First Lady Lambe on their milestone and their life of service, having returned home just yesterday to serve in Bermuda.

And I will allow my last congrats to be given by the next Member that stands up, I think, from Somerset. So, I'll be associated with that when it arrives.

The Speaker: MP Dill.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues.

I would like to certainly add to the condolences for Mrs. Linda Greaves that were already shared within the House and certainly highlight her as a trailblazer in the international business industry. She was amongst the group of Bermudian young women who entered the industry initially as administrators, et cetera, and was able to see the opportunity that Leah had. And certainly, she has been a trailblazer. She ended her career as a vice president in claims at Chubb. And certainly, she is an exemplary individual whose life we could all look at and learn from.

I can remember when I first ran for Parliament in constituency 23, I reached out to her because I knew of her knowledge of her community. But most importantly, her love for her community and her commitment. I will be forever indebted to her for her wisdom, her keen insight, and the encouragement that she provided. And so, I extend my condolences to her family and all who loved her.

I would also like to extend condolences to the family of Mr. Roderic Butler, [Sr.], who is a member of constituency 36.

And I would, on a happier note, I would like to offer congratulations to Mr. Kelly Zuill, "Mr. Gospel" himself, on 62 years of leading as a gospel music announcer and introducing the gospel music industry to Bermuda. Just this last Sunday, he celebrated 62 years. So, I'm sure everyone in this House would like to extend congratulations to him and thanks because he is behind the scenes as we are on every week.

Last but not least, I'd like to offer birthday congratulations to several members in our constituency who are having milestones. I won't say the years, but I will say the names of these individuals. Ms. Janet Roth, Ms. Doris Werner, Mr. Garrett Baxter, who we all know about, Ms. Candy Jones, and Mr. Anthony Yearwood, and Mr. Gary Fraser.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Is there any other?

MP King, would you like your three minutes?

Mr. Robert King: Yes. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I want to send congratulations and commend the great work that the Family [Centre] is doing to address gun violence in Bermuda. The Honourable Minister Weeks was there, and MP Bean was at the monthly meeting that was held at Whitney Institute last night. My colleague here, MP Tucker's husband, Mr. Dorian Tucker, Dr. Ernest Peets, [Jr.], Anthony Bascome, and Cal Burgess all facilitated an extremely productive conversation with members of the community on what must be done to save our youth from untimely deaths due to violence in this community by addressing the underlying needs and providing the resources necessary in a collaborative and coordinated effort through us throughout the Island, you know, based on party . . . not based on party, any particular affiliation, but tackling the problem with a holistic approach. So, I commend them for the work that they are doing, and I gave my commitment yesterday that I would definitely work with them to resolve this issue.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?

MP Famous, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off by saying condolences to many people around the Island and Poinciana Road in particular, the passing of Ms. Brenda Elizabeth Lindsay. Her maiden name was Dunkley. (Not Michael Dunkley, Dunkley, but . . .) Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, she lived in Devonshire most of her life, all of her life practically, and she worked at Speciality Inn for 30-odd years. She is mother to Marlon Lindsay, Wyman Lindsay, and Michelle Lindsay.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I would like to associate the whole House.

Ms. Lindsay was a consummate mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She was well loved, very articulate. She got her hair done twice a month by somebody's mother in here I won't mention. And everyone . . . it was a beautiful service, although people were sad to see her go, but it was a service worthy of her held at Devonshire Christ [Anglican] Church.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to transition on, give plaudits, if that's the right word, to two young Bermudian men. One is, you may know, Mr. Blake Lambert from Somerset, and young Mr. Dimitrius Richardson. These two young men were the project managers-in-training for Mr. Richardson for the recently completed Harmony Hall East project, which completed 12 units. Some were single bedrooms, and some were studios. But the point I am getting at, Mr. Speaker, beyond the fact that we need to build more housing or renovate more housing for our people, we also have to have faith in our young people. And Mr. Blake Lambert had faith in Mr. Dimitrius Richardson to bring him along as a project manager. Dimitrius is a Berkeleyite, both of them are Berkeleyites. He's on good health.

He is an architectural student. He's going to the Kingston University in England, right? But my point is, I want to give credit to Mr. Blake Lambert and the Bermuda Housing staff for having faith in young Dimitrius who saw this to completion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Does any other Member?

MP Tucker, you have your three minutes.

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

I would like to associate myself with the condolences that were expressed to the family of the late Eula Thomas. I may have mentioned here previously that Aunt Eula and Uncle Austin were my actual real relatives. So again, condolences to Selena, Renee, and the rest of the family.

I would like to express condolences to our colleague, Tommy Harvey, on the passing of his brother Dale, which was also mentioned here. So, I associate myself with that. And sorry, all my colleagues would like to be associated with that. It has already been spoken. The whole House would like to associate with those comments.

And also, yesterday I had the opportunity to attend a funeral for Mr. Antonio de Frias. The funeral was at St. Michael's Church yesterday. Mr. de Frias was the father of two of my bosses, Hil [Hildeberto] de Frias and Denis de Frias, and as well as their older brother, Duarte. And the obituary was read, although I didn't get to know Mr. de Frias, Sr., but I certainly worked very closely with the others and have seen firsthand what wonderful people Mr. de Frias has produced along with his wife. So, I would like to express condolences to the de Frias family.

I would also like to say congratulations. It was in the statement that was read earlier by MP and Minister Rabain on the renaming of the Bermuda Library to the Florenz Webbe Maxwell Youth Library. I think that's a great idea. And so, I would just like to say congratulations to her as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier, would you like your three minutes as well?

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask this Honourable House to please send a note of condolences on the passing of Dianne Juliet Russell, who went on to glory on Friday, 27 June, in her 84th year. I'll associate the whole House, Mr. Speaker. Mrs. Russell was the beloved wife of Mr. Raymond Q. Russell Sr., the mother

of Raymond Russell Jr., Reverend Dr. Maria Seaman, and my constituent, Ms. Allisson Russell.

I would like to pay tribute to the family, Mr. Speaker, because they sacrificed to care for her at home until her passing. And we know that that is a challenge for families, and it is something that I always, whenever I spoke to them, I shared, and I certainly did admire. Ms. Russell told me, when I spoke to her, that [her] mom held on until her great-granddaughter, Ny'Asia White, graduated from Berkeley the day prior, with a scholarship I may add. And so, she went home to glory peacefully. And I would like to ask the Honourable House to extend condolences to her family.

I would also ask a letter of condolences be sent to the family of Mrs. Beverly Annette Stoneham. Mr. Speaker, I knew Mrs. Stoneham for most of my life, as my mother did her hair. She was a well-known travel agent, an all-around lovely person, and her one relationship with me is that she got me my first and only job in international business, a summer job in the summer of 1997 at a company called Centre Re, 28 years ago. Unfortunately, although I was off Island for the homegoing service, Kris and I were able to visit with her family at a lively fundraiser at the Bermuda Industrial Union. So, to Marc and Eugene I extend my condolences to you.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with condolences to Ms. Brenda Lindsay, given by the Honourable Member for constituency 11. Ms. Lindsay is someone who I've also known for most of my life, as my mother did her hair as well. And the last time I saw her, she was in what is now called Glam Studio, getting hair done as she religiously did. Certainly, I know the family, Mr. Speaker, and would like to be associated with those condolences.

I would also like to be associated with congratulations that are given to Bermuda's Bishop, Bishop Lambe, on his 60th pastoral anniversary in ministry, and 50 years Bermuda, and 10 years in the United States.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulations offered by the Deputy Speaker, recognising Ms. Bernice Winifred Delores Smith who will be turning 100 years tomorrow. Some of the Opposition Leaders' family introduced themselves to me yesterday outside of Cabinet, and I look forward to celebrating with them tomorrow.

The Speaker: [Microphone not turned on]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon, colleagues.

I would like to be associated with the bereavement's, condolences to the Harvey family which were sent out. I'm not sure, I can't remember which original Member brought it up, but this is quite a tragic loss. Dale Harvey was actually born the same year that I was, a very close family, all of us. Though they are from St. George's, they spent most of their time in St. David's. And I don't think that people know the history of the Harvey family and the St. George's Cricket Club. They were a major part of the beginnings of the St. George's Cricket Club. And so, quite frankly, a very tragic loss for the family who live right on the boundary of the property on both the south side and the west side of the cricket club.

The sad thing about this, Mr. Speaker, is that Aunt Margaret, Dale's mother, has lost three kids. She's still alive and has lost three. Her only daughter, two other sons, and so this is quite tragic. I mean, you know, that doesn't happen too often where a mother has to bury, you know, maybe one child, maybe two, but now three. All what I would consider to be all very young, and they're passing my age and younger.

An Hon. Member: And her husband.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, that's right, and husband.

So, this is a family who has played a major role in the community of St. George's, and so I just want to ensure that if we can, please send a letter of bereavement, because historically they've played a major role in something we called Cup Match and the St. George's Cricket Club that is historic in many ways. So, our bereavement to the family.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Premier, would you like your three minutes?

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today and ask the House to send condolences to the family of Mrs. Helga von Dittel-Trapnell Wingate.

An Hon. Member: You can say that again.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, that's a tongue twister.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Say it faster next time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, sir. If I said it fast, I'd definitely be here for about six minutes.

But Helga was the wife of, I think, everyone in this House, let alone probably Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, knows her husband very well, David Wingate, who was the conservation officer for some 34 years. She was certainly what people call a naturalist.

She was very involved with the, you will know, Mr. Speaker, with WEDCO, the restoration. She was one of the founders along with Dr. Harris. I shouldn't say the founders, but certainly the drivers behind restoring WEDCO, which you and I are both very familiar. She also spent a lot of time with National Trust,

Bermuda Audubon Society, and the Bermuda Botanical Society.

And of course, it's no secret, everyone in the House will know that she and her husband were very much responsible for restoring Nonsuch Island, the nature reserve there, and of course, lived there for some time. So, my condolences to husband David Wingate, and my prayers go out to him and his family.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any other Member?

None other?

Minister, you almost lost.

Hon. Jache Adams: No, I promise I'll be very quick, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to associate myself with the condolences for Mrs. Beverly Stoneham. She was my nursery teacher, and my grandparents seem to find great pleasure in reminding me every time that we're together, that she has literally seen me grow up. So, she has always been a pleasant spirit to me. And then her son Eugene is a good friend of mine, who, as you can appreciate, we have grown up together as well. So, I just wanted to send my condolences to that family.

But also, I wanted to send congratulations to Ms. Harvey and the United Dance Production, who two weeks ago did a recital. I think Minister Furbert's daughter was there, and—

An Hon. Member: Granddaughter.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: My granddaughter.

Hon. Jache Adams: MP Foggo's granddaughter, and everyone's granddaughter, apparently, well, almost everyone's granddaughter was in this recital. But in particular, Mr. Speaker, there was a very special four-year-old named Yara Michelle Adams, who took great pleasure in dancing to a Barbie song, and *Shake Your Groove Thing* was a tap thing. And so, something tells me that I will be going to recitals for quite some time, but just wanted to say job well done to them. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None other?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Before I move on, I'd just like to acknowledge in the Gallery today former Senator Santucci.

Nice to have you visiting us today.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you. Reverend Santucci, yes.

The next item on the order paper this afternoon is matters of privilege.

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 BILL

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Speaker: There is a Government Bill to be introduced by the Minister of Finance, but the Deputy Premier is going to introduce it on behalf of the Premier.

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

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 Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025.

Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are no other Bills.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are no motions.

That now takes us to the Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: The first item this morning, this afternoon, is the second reading of the Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 (a tongue twister).

And the Junior Minister will be introducing that for us today.

Junior Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, this will not take long. But Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025, be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

LAND VALUATION AND TAX (SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND POSTPONEMENT OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT VALUATION LIST) ACT 2025

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for the second reading and the approval of this Honourable House this Bill entitled Land Valuation and Tax ([Special Provisions and] Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the main purpose of this Bill is to postpone the date by which the [quinquennial] draft valuation list is next due to be prepared under the Land Valuation and Tax Act 1967 (the Act) and to extend the validity period of the current valuation list.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware that the Land Valuation (the list) sets out the annual ARV [Annual Rental Value] for properties in Bermuda. The 2015 valuation list is a current list in force as the 2020 [quinquennial] revolution . . . revaluation, sorry, revaluation of the properties was postponed in order to help reduce uncertainty for taxpayers affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, the next [quinquennial] draft valuation list is due to be deposited on 31 December 2025. Mr. Speaker, the Bill extends the date of preparation of the next [quinquennial] revaluation by one year and confirms the continuation of the 2015 valuation list as a valuation list for Bermuda until 31 December 2026.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: That's not yours; not yours.

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

The Speaker: Don't worry about it.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you.

[Quinquennial]. The next draft valuation list will be . . . will go on deposit on 31 December 2026 and will come into effect for land tax purposes on 1 January 2027. The authority for making such an order is provided by section 26(2) of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of the Land Valuation Department (the Department) in updating and maintaining the valuation list are crucial to the Bermuda land tax system. The Tax Commission anticipates raising over $87 million in land tax revenue, which accounts for 6.1 per cent of the Government's projected revenue for the fiscal year 2025/26 based on the ARVs and the current 2015 valuation list.

Mr. Speaker, the [quinquennial] revaluation involves revaluing all properties on the Island, and Honourable Members will appreciate that this is a considerable and significant undertaking for a department which comprises only eight members of staff. The objective of a [quinquennial] revaluation is to reflect changes in property rental values at a specific point in time. This mass appraisal ensures that all properties are valued on the same basis and date promoting equity and fairness in assessments and, consequently, in land tax liability for Bermuda residents.

Mr. Speaker, a key component of the revaluation process involves collecting data on approximately 37,000 valuation units. Historically, this has been done by printing and mailing out hard copy notices and forms. I am sure many recall those forms. The data received back is manually entered into the department's IT system, a process that takes about six months. It requires hiring temporary data inputters. In addition to paying overtime to the department staff, the six months spent on transcribing information from the hard copy form would be better utilised analysing the rental data and valuation model building.

Mr. Speaker, given the importance of the valuation list, it is essential to modernise the Act governing the [quinquennial] revaluation and the much-needed transition to online forms. This modernisation will enable the department to operate efficiently in today's digital age eliminating outdated legislative provisions that are no longer suitable for the modern world, such as printing and mailing of hard copy notices and forms to each taxpayer and, upon production of the draft valuation list, depositing a printed copy of the hard copy list at every post office on the Island.

Mr. Speaker, the one-year postponement of the preparation of the next [quinquennial] draft valuation list will ensure a smooth transition to digital forms and completion of necessary legislative changes to the Act. These changes directly impact the next and all future [quinquennial] revaluations as they support long-term digital transformation and remove antiquated procedures which have no place in the 21st century digital age.

Mr. Speaker, it should also be noted that there are no adverse financial effects arising from the one-

year postponement of the preparation of the next draft valuation list. In addition to enabling operational readiness for this transition to electronic submission of notices and online forms, property owners maintain certainty in land tax liability as there will not be holistic changes to 37,000 ARVs due to a revaluation this year. Additionally, residential property owners will benefit from a 50 per cent reduction on the base land (and we've had discussion during the budget debate) tax rate commencement January 2026. This measure is to provide relief to all homeowners and aligns with Government's commitment to building a Bermuda that benefits everyone and easing the cost of living.

Furthermore, ARV thresholds for pensioners' exemptions, rent control, and sales of properties to restricted persons will not need to be adjusted because of a 2025 draft valuation list and across-the-board changes to ARVs.

Mr. Speaker, with the continuation of the 2015 valuation list for an additional year the existing list will continue to be updated as normal for property changes such as new builds (so, if you build a new building then of course it's going to be updated), demolitions, splits, mergers, et cetera. Honourable Members should also note that property owners will continue to have the right to request a reassessment of their property (I doubt there will be many) if there have been any physical alterations, including the right to object to any proposed ARV amendments made by the department to the 2015 valuation list, as they do now.

Mr. Speaker, postponing the preparation of the next draft valuation list not only ensures certainty in land tax liabilities for property owners and stable revenue from the land tax for the government, but also safeguards a smooth transition to digital forms and the completion of necessary imminent legislative changes to the Act. As previously mentioned, these changes will significantly influence the upcoming and all future [quinquennial] revaluations by advancing long-term digital transformation and eliminating outdated practices that no longer belong in the digital era.

Mr. Speaker, with those introductory remarks, I now move that the Bill entitled Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 be read for the second time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Junior Minister for the presentation.

With the passing of this Bill, we will have gone 11 years with an out-of-date, or not-up-to-date, land valuation list. And, of course, I think we can all understand the 2020 issue with COVID-19 and the requirements therein. It was mentioned that there would not be any, you know, financial impacts to this. But, of course, if there are people the value of whose property has decreased with respect to the market, they will now perhaps spend another year paying a higher land tax than they might otherwise have, or, conversely, the government may be missing out on land tax revenue where properties have increased. So that is a comment that I have there.

I am curious, though, why the delay is happening now and why, for example, this was not something that was considered sooner by the Government before the five-year deadline ran out. You know, I do note that the Junior Minister spoke about upcoming changes to legislation that would change the process to make it more efficient. Perhaps he could provide some indication of what kinds of things that are in the process that are, you know, actions required by legislation versus the actual practice, i.e., do we need to actually change the law for (I imagine it would be) the Land Valuation Office to change the processes and procedures? Or are there things that they could have just cracked on and made changes with anyway without changes to the law?

I know he did refer to the depositing of the list in the post office. And with due respect, of course, I personally would not go to the post office to look it up if it was available online. But with due respect, printing out and putting this list in the number of post offices that we have, I would suggest is perhaps not so burdensome that we ought to delay the list for a year. And as we know there are many individuals in our society who that is their way of accessing this kind of information from the government. They are not fully online. And I would submit that you would probably need to provide this list in hard copy anyway.

I also can appreciate that you would want to have procedures that allow these. I know that there are forms that get sent out and returns that have to be made, and then notices, and then you have to review the notice and then you could object. And I can also understand that we would like to do this online as much as possible. But we know, Mr. Speaker, there are going to be those who need to do it in hard copy. That's the way of the world. And I would like to know if there are specific things in the law that prevent the digitisation of those processes.

Other than that, you know, we do not have a major objection to this, Mr. Speaker. I just would like to know why it has taken so long. Why did they come to the end of that five-year period to decide that now we have to make the changes and change the law versus perhaps starting that in 2022 or 2023?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

None other?

Minister, would you like to take the floor again?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Let me just make it very clear, and I said it during the actual speech. If anyone wants to get their property revalued, they think that it has gone down in value, they can do it. And if you think your property has gone up and you want to get it revalued, you can do that also, so you can pay more taxes. That's fine with us. That's everyone.

I doubt, as I said, if anyone who knows their property has gone up would think they would run to the government in a hurry to get it reassessed. But if you feel that yours has gone up and you feel like you want to go ahead and do it, we welcome you to visit the office, and they will be glad to come over to your house tomorrow. But if you feel that your [property value] has gone down, again, you have the right to go to the department and ask for it to be reassessed.

I will follow up on that point, Member, regarding the question you had asked about the . . . sorry, here it is. Thank you.

Yes, so it has only been recently . . . the information I have is that it has only been agreed here recently that it will be digitalised. Only fairly recently. So, after five years, yes, it was supposed to be done. But since it has been agreed here recently, we decided to postpone it for another year to get it done, make that happen.

The Speaker: No, no, no, no, we're not in Committee. We are in the House.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Oh, sorry.

The Speaker: Yes, you have to move us to Committee now. Move us to Committee.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I thought for some reason we were in . . . , I don't know why.

The Speaker: No, no; no, no.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I don't know why. I should have known that. Thank you.

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

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:06 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

LAND VALUATION AND TAX (SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND POSTPONEMENT OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT VALUATION LIST) ACT 2025

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025.

I call on the Junior Minister.

I am giving the Junior Minister two seconds to organise his papers.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I wanted to move all the clauses.

The Chairman: It has been moved that all clauses be put on the table for consideration.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Junior Minister?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to modify the effect of the Land Valuation and Land Tax 1967 (the Act) so as to extend the validity of the [current valuation list].

Clause 1 provides a title for the Bill.

Clause 2 provides for the interpretation of the Bill.

Clause 3 modifies the effect of the Act as to extend until 31 December 2026 the validity of the current valuation list, which is the 2015 valuation list.

Clause 4 postpones the date by which the next draft valuation list for the purpose of the section 26(1) of the Act shall be prepared from 31 December 2025 to 31 December 2026.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.

Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairman.

Regarding clause 4, which states the date of postponement to 31 December 2026. Given that we are already in July of 2025, and my understanding is that we will have to create a new digital process, based on the briefing, they will then have to kind of execute that process, get the information, get the list approved. Is that date perhaps too close in the future? How can we be confident that everything's going to get done in time? Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

Minister?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Chairman, I believe that the staff at the department are working hard, and we will make sure that this happens in a timely basis they put forward here.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

There being no other Members, Minister?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be . . . clauses 1 through 4 be [approved].

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses one through four be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: And 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?

There are none.

So moved.

[Motion carried: The Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:12 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

LAND VALUATION AND TAX (SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND POSTPONEMENT OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT VALUATION LIST) ACT 2025

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

Are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Purpose Permit on Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 being reported to the House?

There are none.

Thank you. It has been reported to the House.

We will now move on to Item No. 2 on the Order Paper, which is the second reading of the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025, and it is in the name of the Minister of Cabinet and the Cabinet Office.

Would you like to start your matter, Minister?

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled Parliamentary Election Act Amendment Act 2025 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

None.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 is to grant the Parliamentary Registrar the authority to appoint staff within the Parliamentary Registry.

This amendment is a key step in supporting the ongoing reorganisation of the department which commenced in February 2024 with the aim of enhancing the operational efficiency, independence, and overall effectiveness of the office. By formalising the Registrar's staffing authority in legislation, this amendment assures that the Parliamentary Registry can remain appropriately resourced to fulfil its critical mandate of administering elections and maintaining the Parliamentary [Registry] while aligning with best practices for independent electoral bodies.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment comes at a time when there is increasing public expectation for electoral reform and modernisation. To meet these expectations, it is essential that the Parliamentary [Registrar] be positioned to recruit and retain the right talent and expertise and to do so in a timely and efficient manner. Granting the Registrar the authority to appoint staff and engage technical advisors ensures that the office can remain responsive to the evolving needs of the electoral system while upholding its independence and maintaining the highest standards of electoral integrity.

Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 introduces a new clause under section 6 of the Act to formalise the staffing arrangements within the Parliamentary Registry. This clause provides that the Registrar will be supported by such a number of public officers that may be required for the discharge of the Registrar’s duty. It further empowers

the Registrar to delegate specific duties, powers or functions to staff with the exception of the power to delegate itself.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment also allows the Registrar to engage technical or professional advisors as needed to assist with specialised demands of electoral administration. Importantly, all staff appointed or engaged under this provision will be under the direction and control of the Registrar in the performance of their duties under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, this change reinforces the operational independence and flexibility of the Parliamentary Registrar ensuring the Office is properly resourced and positioned to meet its constitutional responsibilities effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Any other Member?

There are none? . . . Oh, MP King.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the House, and the listening public.

I [have] just a small question. How will accountability work with regard to this amendment? Thank you.

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

Opposition Leader.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, I just wanted to explore it a little bit more. Obviously changing . . . we obviously support any increase in the Parliamentary Registrar's abilities, and we know that she has an incredibly difficult task, so therefore, additional resources and additional flexibility in getting those resources is good.

As it relates to accountability, I think it is a question of there are HR protocols in place with all government departments. And those protocols include certain safeguards. And the question relates to, are those safeguards still going to be in place? Will the hiring process still entail that we are getting the best quality staff, et cetera?

It is a general question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None other.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, as with other entities that have been given this responsibility, there are still . . . the persons will still be hired under the relevant collective bargaining agreements and subject to the same scrutiny that all government employees will be subject to, that is, annual performance appraisals, job descriptions, et cetera.

What this does . . . [it] is an Act that was brought into place to kind of cut through some of the barriers that some departments have with the hiring process and the difficulty it does take. And so, by bringing this down to the Parliamentary Registrar to be able to look at, interview and recommend, the hiring of persons at that level removes other layers that would have normally been in place for this.

This is not uncommon to a lot of government departments under the Act that the Governor signed off on last year in January. And so other departments have moved toward this delegated authority to hire their own persons. So, the processes will still be in place to vet them, to make sure they are doing their job. And all of those sorts of things will still be there. It is just that we are cutting through some of that red tape it takes to get the people in place.

The Speaker: You move us to . . . Move us to Committee.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Okay. I did have a little bit to finish us off.

The Speaker: Oh, okay.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But that's okay. We will move to Committee.

[Laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Speaker.

House in Committee at 3:19 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the whole [House] for the Bill entitled the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move all clauses.

The Chairman: The Minister has moved that all clauses be considered.

Any objections to that?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 inserts a new section 6A that provides for the appointment or engagement of staff. It formalises the staffing arrangements within the Parliamentary Registrar. This clause provides that the Registrar will be supported by such a number of public officers that may be required for the discharge of the Registrar's functions. It further empowers the Registrar to delegate specific duties, powers or functions to staff with the exception of the power to delegate itself.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

There are no other Members.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I would like to move that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There being none, so approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Any objections to that?

There are none, so approved.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill entitled Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So approved.

[Motion carried: The Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:21 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has so been done.

We will now move on to the third item which is the second reading of the Building Amendment Act 2025. Again, this is in the name of the Minister of the Cabinet [Office].

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled Building Amendment Act 2025 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise and share with Members of the House this Bill entitled Building Amendment Act 2025 which has been some time in the making.

Mr. Speaker, in a Ministerial Statement delivered on 30 May [2025], I discussed a range of initiatives under consideration by the Department of Planning to address the long-standing challenges in processing building permits and managing planning procedures. At that time, I committed to keeping this Honourable House and the public informed as we advance measures designed to streamline and modernise the Planning processes.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us today, while procedurally modest, sets us firmly on that path. It proposes a straight-forward but important change, amending section 23 of the Bermuda Building Act 1998 by replacing the affirmative resolution process with the negative resolution process for regulations made under that section. Section 23 empowers the Minister to make regulations for carrying out the purposes of the Act, including adopting or updating building codes and setting construction standards. This amendment will enable such technical regulations to be updated more efficiently without the need to refer each change back to the full House for approval while preserving parliamentary oversight and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, this change enables us to act more swiftly where appropriate without compromising the high standards and safeguards the public expects. It supports our broader aim of building a planning system that is responsive, reliable and fit for purpose. In short, it aligns with our commitment to: *Be builders, not blockers, respect the time and expertise of applicants and professionals, and deliver the practical reforms the public has consistently called for in which we have a duty to implement*.

Mr. Speaker, one regulation that will immediately benefit from this amendment is the Competent Persons Scheme (CPS), an initiative I referenced in my May 30, [2025] Statement. Under this scheme, suitably qualified professionals designated as "competent persons," will be empowered to self-certify that building works comply with the applicable codes and regulations. By shifting certain responsibilities to these qualified professionals, the scheme is expected to significantly reduce reliance on inspections carried out by the department's building inspectors. This in turn will accelerate project timelines, reduce administrative burdens and deliver meaningful cost-savings across a wide range of building developments, all while maintaining high standards for safety and regulatory compliance.

Mr. Speaker, to implement the Competent Persons Scheme effectively the legislative framework underpinning the Act must be sufficiently adaptable. This regulatory change therefore is both necessary and practical. It ensures that we can move promptly to modernise the regulatory environment and support industry innovation while retaining proper oversight of standards. Timely implementation is critical. It will facilitate more efficient credentialing of professionals and help uphold rigorous safety and quality standards, informed by industry experts and professional best practices as determined by the appropriate regulatory committees. Given the technical nature of these updates, the negative resolution process is both appropriate and proportionate.

Mr. Speaker, by adopting this more streamlined approach, the Government is taking a decisive step towards the modernisation of Bermuda's construction regulatory framework. An amendment not only supports the successful roll-out of this Competent Persons Scheme but also lays the foundation for further reforms aimed at reducing delays and enhancing efficiency across the sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I now invite comments from my honourable colleagues.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the Explanatory Memorandum, "the Department of Planning to more efficiently establish qualifications and industry standards for the building trades," what standards and qualifications are we speaking to, specifically? City & Guilds is a bit vague. Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Opposition Leader.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We thank the Government for advancing initiatives to reduce the amount of red tape in the building sector, especially as it relates to our current problem in Bermuda with our affordable housing issues. With some 1,100 homeless persons in Bermuda, we do need to advance these measures to make sure that we can deal with the housing situation.

Two points, Mr. Speaker. The first is a general point where we see any movement from positive resolution to negative resolution, we raise the issue as being the parliamentary oversight will come after the Minister has made the decision, after the regulations are issued. We in this House obviously can still pick up the matter, but it is after the fact. And any time we see that happening we always have to raise a general point of caution because that does mean that even though the matter will be expedited for the national interest, that does remove our ability to proactively comment on the matter. So, we raise that always as a point of caution and we hope the Minister will exercise the power with the discretion that he is known for.

Mr. Speaker, further to that, under the Competent Persons Scheme coming under or being facilitated by way of this motion, the Honourable Minister noted that the Competent Persons Scheme will allow a person to acquire a form of designation or recognition thereby allowing them to make certain inspections and certain approvals within the planning process and construction process. What we are raising here is the monitoring of . . . if the Honourable Minister could speak to how this process will be monitored.

We have information that indicates there will be . . . that building inspectors will be allowed to make spot checks. We have information that says that these competent persons will be monitored in some way. But as it stands right now, we do not have more fulsome information. And obviously when we go down the certification regime for crucial roles like this, we do have to make sure that these persons are undertaking their jobs with a degree of professionalism and seriousness as necessary.

In financial services regulation we have fit and proper regimes. And in other countries they have senior . . . it used to be called *managed function regimes.* And it basically just means that those persons in those trusted roles have their own regulatory regime that is literally sitting on top of them that they have to comply with so that when they are exercising their roles they

do so under controlled circumstances. So, could the Honourable Minister speak to how we intend to oversee those competent persons to ensure that, again, they do their jobs with technical excellence and professional acumen, and they stay up to date with their qualifications.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

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

Minister.

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

I want to thank my honourable colleagues for their thoughtful contributions to this debate. It is for the constructive spirit in which this Bill has been actually put forth. While today's amendment is procedural, it is significant and that should not be understated. As noted, modernising our regulatory framework is essential if we are going to meet the evolving needs of the construction sector and uphold the high standards that the public rightly expects.

So, as I said when I tabled the Bill, the Competent Persons Scheme is just one example of how this change will be applied in practice. We are already identifying additional areas where this streamlined process will allow us to act more efficiently and responsibly.

But before I go into that, I do want to answer and speak to some of the questions that have come up. I want to kind of connect a question from MP King to the last question that you talked about. The regulatory framework does sit on top. So, what we are talking about is registered engineers who have their own entity. Registered architects who have their own entity. We also have the occupational standards that exist within the Department of Workforce Development for electricians. Now with electricians, but there has always been talk of doing other ones as well.

When this scheme was first discussed, it was discussed that the . . . sort of, the first initial foray would be into the solar power installation. And there is a certain qualification that is required to be able to install these solar panels that is done through the Department of Workforce Development and the Bermuda College. So, you get a certificate that says you can install these things.

So the real purpose of the Competent Persons Scheme is, instead of having an inspector go up and [inspect] that the guy has put the bolt in correctly, you are expecting that these persons who are qualified and gone through the process of getting their qualifications to do their work, they can self-certify what it is that they are doing because they should know if they are not doing it right, that word will spread.

One thing that I have learned about dealing with especially the occupational registration is, everybody in their field knows who the bad actors are. And they know who the good people are. And in Bermuda, while they say *Bermuda is another world,* we do find that these persons tend to look out for each other. And you know, they will say, *Hey, that's the guy you want to use.* And that reputation spreads quite quickly here in Bermuda as small as it is. You know, if you want to get this done, that's not the person you go to. This is the person you go to. How many of us have said, *This is where I take my car for the mechanic,* because we know he is good. *Don't go over there.* Right?

But as you said, the regulatory framework will sit on top. And so, the Department of Planning will be meeting with Workforce Development to actually look at how do we keep a registry of these people and so they are listed and then there are also consequences if you are found to be a bad actor. You come off that list. You will not be able to do it. And those sorts of things. And so, it will kind of look after itself. And it is starting small with the solar installers and then obviously we are looking that this could be rolled out to other trades. And of course, the engineers and architects as it matures.

In terms of going from positive to negative, I completely agree with you. One of the things that my permanent secretary and I did discuss is, we have been waiting for . . . apparently, they have been waiting for this to actually do it. And in the time that this was first announced, I did some research yesterday and I read no less than four Ministerial Statements that talked about implementing this and the need to change legislation that date back to . . . date back quite a while, including a Member who no longer sits on this side. A Ministerial Statement that, *This is what I am doing.* And so, you know, and we said, it was like, they could have just done this by positive resolution all this time. You know? And just got it out of the way.

But I understand, after talking to them, because this is going to be something that will be tweaked on a consistent basis. As you see something that needs to be changed, we will change the regulation. And so, their thought was that if it was positive . . . if it was positive versus negative, there would be always this delay, and if you saw something that needed to changed and moved . . . and so you can trust . . . well, you can trust me that we will not be doing anything crazy as this moves forward. Because this is an area of expertise that I actually do have a very . . . I have a knowledge about from being in this area before. And I know some of the things. I try my very best to be as fair as possible when we do this stuff.

So, I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that one example that we have highlighted in recent weeks was a concern of drainage and site run-off issues. Problems that if not addressed proactively can have serious consequences for neighbouring properties and the wider environment. Specifically, there have been situations where projects were completed in accordance with building codes and gained certificates of use and occupancy while compliance measures that were required to secure the certificate were subsequently removed or altered. The ability to adopt technical regulations more

swiftly under the negative resolution process will enable us to implement targeted measures to prevent such issues in the future, including regulations that will require certain compliance measures such as drainage control and run-off barriers to be retained, and properties maintained after construction is completed and occupancy certificates have been issued.

By way of a small, just a quick explanation of that, what we have found is there may be things that are in place that are not part of the approved drawing that needs to be in place in order for the construction to be done and we recognise there is no legal remit to make you retain that once you are done. So, you may take it away and you are having the issues that this thing was preventing. But because it was never something that was approved in the first place, there is no legal standing. And so, we are looking at using this to actually see how we can put things in place and say, if it is something that can come up after you have got approval that is part of the building, to build properly, it has to remain. Or we will be able to come and fine. Right now we cannot order you to put it back.

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the kind of practical solution-based reform that the public has asked us to deliver. It strikes a balance between the need for efficiency and the imperative of maintaining rigorous standards and accountability. I am confident that this amendment lays a solid foundation for further improvements that will benefit homeowners, developers and professionals and the community as a whole. Again, I thank my honourable colleagues for their engagement and support, and I commend this Bill to the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 3:36 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] to consider the Bill entitled the Building Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move all clauses.

The Chairman: The Minister has asked that we move all clauses.

Are there any objections?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Objections?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Oh, there are none.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides for the citation.

Clause 2 amends section 23(2) of the Building Act 1988 to change the procedure for regulations made under the Act from “affirmative” to “negative.”

Clause 3 provides the Act to come into effect upon notice by the Minister.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 3? One through—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, very much, Madam Acting Speaker*[sic]*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: [Madam] Chairman, yes.

Thank you, Minister. Minister, with apologies, I didn’t actually hear your original presentation and the brief and it may be you have answered my one question during your presentation. But in terms of the change to the regulation that is anticipated, which will now be under the negative resolution procedure rather than the affirmative, are there specific changes coming down the pipeline that the Minister has in mind or is it just a general change? Thank you.

The Chairman: Minister . . . Just a minute, are there any other Members who wish to speak?

[No audible reply]

The Chairman: Sorry, Minister. You have the floor.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, this . . . specifically we have the Competent Persons Scheme coming down the pipeline. I will . . . if you wish, I could talk about that offline to you specifically, because we have talked about it here. But we have already identified other areas that we believe that we will be able to make some inroads with this negative resolution. And you may have come in when I talked about the drainage issue we have. That is one area that we are looking at and we are now seeking advice from Chambers on if we can do anything to sort that out. But, specifically, the Competent Persons Scheme is one that we are looking to implement very rapidly once this is passed.

The Chairman: Thank you.

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

I recognise Member Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And thank you, Minister, for that answer and that really is very helpful. Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay.

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

There being none—Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1, 2 and 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none; approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none; approved.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill entitled Building Amendment Act 2025 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill entitled Building Amendment Act 2025 be approved as written.

So approved.

[Timer chimes]

[Motion carried: The Building Amendment Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:40 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Building Amendment Act 2025 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none; it has been.

Members, that brings us to a close of the business of the day so we will have our third readings now.

Junior Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

LAND VALUATION AND TAX (SPECIAL PROVISIONS AND POSTPONEMENT OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT VALUATION LIST) ACT 2025

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: 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 is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Land Valuation and Tax (Special Provisions and Postponement of Preparation of Draft Valuation List) Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister for the Cabinet [Office].

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to allow me to move the Bill entitled the Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: 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 is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you.
You can do your second matter.

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 the Bill entitled Building Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?
There are none.
Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

BUILDING AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: 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 is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Building Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I move that the Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 18 July [2025].

The Speaker: Any objections?
No objections.
Anyone wish to speak to that?
MP Famous.

BERMUDIANS URGED TO SAVE MONEY FOR HOUSING

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. Good afternoon, colleagues and the people of Bermuda. Happy Sabbath, when the sun goes down, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I am going to start my very brief motion to adjourn with something from the Bible.

Genesis 6:13 to 22. I won't read the whole passage but, New [King] James Version: "And God said to Noah, . . . make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch."

[*Inaudible interjections]*

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Excuse me, one second. Let me just interrupt. Senator Furbert *[sic]* . . .

An Hon. Member: Fubler.

The Speaker: Fubler. I didn't recognise you. And I see you are leaving now. I just want to recognise you in the Gallery first. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

[Motion to adjourn, continuing]

The Speaker: Continue, MP.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: *You must go ahead and build the ark.*

Mr. Speaker, we have heard in various debates in this House that we need to increase the population. And just to be clear, increased population does not mean give out status. So, we accept that we need to increase the population in order to have a healthy tax base and take care of our growing, greying population. Did I say that correctly? MP Ben?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: You want to increase the workforce.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I did say that.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: You said to increase the population.

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: You have to increase jobs first.

The Speaker: The conversation should flow this way, you know.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Deputy. You are not in the Chair, Deputy. The conversation needs to flow this way.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, every week I am being "teachered."

An Hon. Member: The expression is "taught."

Mr. Christopher Famous: Taught. That's the word. Taught.

Mr. Speaker, let me clarify.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: We need to increase the working population in order to have a healthy tax base and to be able to afford to pay for the growing, greying population.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I didn't say the word "status."

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: We have heard from a Government report that crystallises what we have heard anecdotally. There are Bermudians who are leaving the Island due to the cost of living. Primarily the inability to purchase their own house. The inability, at some point, to even rent houses. We see in the newspaper and online the prices that are being charged just to rent houses.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Astronomical.

We have heard from some in the private sector that it is not their responsibility to build affordable housing because by the time they pay this, that and the other, in order for them to make a decent profit they have to sell it for "X." Or, they have to rent it for "X." So, these are accepted facts that I think both sides of the House can agree on.

Is that okay with you, MP Ben?

[No audible response]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Right.

So, what do we have to do, Mr. Speaker? Where does this leave us? If we want our people, Bermudians of all stripes to remain in this Island, it is going to fall on the Government's shoulder to build affordable housing—more affordable housing.

The former Minister, Colonel Burch, he did projects such as Loughlands, Butterfield Lane, Anchorage Lane, Perimeter Lane, and so on and so forth. Things that provide affordable housing for our Bermudians. Harbour View Village. Now, under the new Minister, again under the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we are launching an aggressive programme to do so. I won't go into details because that is the Minister's prerogative to do that. But I call upon the Premier and others to provide the funds, and when the funds are provided, for the Opposition to understand that these are needed. It is not frivolous. This is not a vanity project.

You see, Mr. Speaker, back to the ark reference. Moses tried . . . I mean, Noah.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Noah tried to warn the people; they did not listen. And because they did not listen, when that rain started coming, they started knocking and it was already too late. As leaders in this country, Mr. Speaker, it is all right for the Government to provide "X", but some people think the Government is supposed to provide X, Y and Z. As leaders—not just politicians, as leaders—we have to tell our people, *Cut out the frivolous spending.*

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Right?

Another Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Because the day is going to come that you may have an opportunity to buy your own house, but you do not have the downpayment. Not that you never have the money, but you spent it on trips, you spent it on Carnival, you spent it on whatever else. Right?

As leaders we have to tell our people the price of housing is not going down. There may be some adjustment in some of the material costs, but the overall cost of housing is not going down, Mr. Speaker.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I am going to close with this. We have to build that ark. That ark is called housing. Because if we don't, Mr. Speaker, at present numbers within the next 10 to 15 years the ratio of Bermudian to non-Bermudian is going to be about 50/50. In another 15 to 20 years after that, we will become the minority in our own country. This is what we see in countries such as the Cayman Islands.

So, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the House, each of us has a responsibility not just to our family but as elected members to our people. So, when these announcements are made about future projects, we are going to do our best to contain the costs. But please, please do not try to stifle us, and [just] as

important, please explain to your constituents, especially your younger ones, to save their money. The flood is coming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

MP Swan.

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

[Inaudible interjections]

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to give thanks first of all because today is a very important anniversary for me. A year ago today this House was sitting, and I was unable to attend because on 11 July [2024], on a Thursday, I had an operation that was supposed to be a simple one, and there were some complications. Thankfully, through some checks and balances I found out that I could have been at the checkout counter. But they were able to rectify some internal bleeding, and after a few weeks in the hospital I was able to get back to normal recovery. So, I am thankful to be here today to do the business that I was elected to do. And ever so grateful given the circumstances that I experienced last year.

And I want to say thank you to the staff of the Bermuda Hospital who a lot of people confuse with the emergency which gets oversubscribed, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people go to emergency because of varying circumstances. That is not the nature of my speech, but I just wanted to say that the service that you get if you are admitted in the hospital, is first class. And I experienced it. And I just want to say thank you to the rank-and-file workers, right down to those who deliver the food to the persons who help the nurses, the nurses and the medical team who come and attend.

My experience (and there have been several occasions over the past year, the last 14 months) has been that they do good service. And not necessarily consistent with the criticism that gets broadly blanketed, levelled at hospitals in Bermuda.

To pick up on a familiar theme about how we are going to grow the economy, sometimes you just need to keep saying things. In my constituency 2, in the great parish of St. George's in Ferry Reach, lies the . . . exists one of the best examples of educational tourism. It is called BIOS [Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences].

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And BIOS, 100 years ago, well, 98 years ago, in 1927, was developed as a golf resort called Shore Hill Golf Course and Hotel, when St. George's had four . . . had three actual golf courses in St. George's Island. If Bermuda had more golf courses 100 years ago per square mile than anywhere in the world, which it did . . . St. George's had more golf courses per capita area than anywhere in the globe. And it did for many years, then. And Bermuda continues to hold true to that statistic.

BIOS transformed through the war. And where it was a hotel . . . it now still functions as a hotel. A constituent of mine said, *We've got check-ins tomorrow and I have got to go and turn down beds.* And I said, *Boy, that sounds ever so familiar to the language that we used at the Belmont 50 years ago.* And those young people who come in and go out and they are learning their trade, and they are becoming doctors (many of them) [might] like to sort of maybe do some research to find out who has been through and where they are now [and] are part of educational tourism.

Granada. Last week we had a visitor, a celebrated doctor who practices in Memphis, who comes from a political family in Granada come here and spend the whole day with us, listening to us last year, and shared with me that the St. George's University in Granada houses the medical university. It is a US medical university. It is one of the largest employers in Granada. And she said, *I listened to you talk about that educational tourism component, and you are right.* And I said, *Yes, because the BIOS model did not just happen in Bermuda 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago*. It has been around for a long time. And it exists and it has just been a sleeper, just been a quiet sleeper in the East End, and it has grown from strength to strength and punches well above its weight and is of significance in the world of science and education.

But we are punching above our weight in international business. We are punching above our weight in regulatory spaces. The Bermuda Monetary Authority is certainly highly respected globally. So why aren't we looking to import and why can't we import young people to come here, attend school, and maybe [do an] internship, and when we are doing that, we can look at the reciprocals because there is nothing more important than to get our people overseas to broaden their horizons.

That comes to what I have always continued to say, and I say it every Wednesday, the cornerstone of tourism is relationships. The cornerstone of the Bermuda that we enjoy today in international company business . . . we talk about the GDP of Bermuda, but let me tell you this: Every company that came to this country came here because we had a tourism product that invited people. Business prides itself on relationships. So, if we had a poor tourism example, they would not have looked to here. But they did so because the two are intertwined. And so, they can remain intertwined

And so, when we are looking at the . . . and everybody is crickets when it comes to Bermuda (and I am not talking about the House), crickets when it

comes to what is taking place at Southampton Princess. Well, Southampton Princess is on its way to be opening in 2026. And they are doing a wonderful job now of trying to encourage Bermudians to come there and work up there in that great part of Bermuda where my great grandmother's property was once located.

But I am here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to see is Bermuda getting into the game of bringing young people here to be educated and work internships. It could happen very easily. And we can boost our enrolment in the college at the same time. And they could work in some hotels because, let's face it, there are not enough of us at this particular time to fill all those jobs. It may sound nice. We might have 70 per cent threshold marks to get employment, but you know, we got to work on repatriating some Bermudians at the same time to come back.

But we need to have a contingency plan. And I am here to tell you that education is a great way to go. Because whilst we are educating ourselves, we can get people who would come here and be educated and work at the same time. So, it might take having a conversation with the Minister of Labour. But in my space in tourism . . . and I declare my interest, I spent my entire life—more than half, almost three-quarters-plus of my life—in hospitality in some form or fashion. From the cleaner of the toilets and the floors to management. So, I appreciate everything from the top to the bottom. But more importantly, everything in between.

And I believe that that model that exists in this country, we can partner with folks overseas. I also believe in this. Someone asked me about, *How are you going to educate young Bermudians?* Well, up at Sandys 360 . . . not Sandys 360. That was a faux pas. Sandys Middle School is going to be a signature school for hospitality. Right? Now that school could also partner with maybe universities and the like as future candidates of those schools. I know my alma mater who came here and signed an articulation agreement has a hospitality programme. I know many others have hospitality programmes. It is not exclusive just to Troy. But it exists in many universities. We have to make those relationships with persons.

My experience as a coach, and a top-class one at that, has been that at some point in time you have to be prepared to link people up with people who can take them further. And that is what we need to do with some of the things that we are grappling with in this country, even when it comes to antisocial behaviour. We have got to do that. We have got to look and partner people up and work together.

So, I am here to say that educational tourism is something that we cannot turn our noses up to. It is something that we need to embrace. And it is something that we can get involved in and we do not need a lot of infrastructure development to do it. It is something . . . and you know what? It is something that is already happening. The model is already here. Arizona State University is right down in St. George's in my wonderful constituency as a model. That model, whilst it is in the sciences, can also be in reinsurance [and] can also be in hospitality. It could also be in sport and academies.

Look at all the young people who have gone overseas [from] Bermuda, and spent, as Mohammad Ali would say, *millions and millions and millions of dollars*, being educated by linking people up in this country. And when I am talking about education when it comes to sports, I am looking at our natural sports. I am looking at sailing with folks from the winter cold months in Scandinavia and Germany and Canada who are now part of SailGP and the like. They would revel being here in January and February, those young people. And I will just declare my interest, there was a young fellow representing Bermuda last week and this week in San Diego, Oliver Betschart. His parents have the absolute model. He is a home schooler.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, I'm not going there.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But yes, I am proud to have coached him, and many others, Kenny Leseur, and the like.

But I am here to say that I learned a lot from his parents because they were home schoolers. And when the time came, I said to his mother, *We are not going to argue and we are not going to get involved in what doesn't exist in Bermuda. Get that child out of here immediately.* He was nine and she signed him up for the Drive, Chip & Putt in Orlando. And when they went to the Drive, Chip & Putt he excelled. He met a young lady there and they were doing home schooling from Toronto. That young lady came to Bermuda when he and . . . when the PGA had an event at Port Royal and she won—six years on. Relationships! Those relationships stick to it.

The coach that he has today, *the coach that he has today,* his only win on the PGA Tour was when he defeated who in 1996? Tiger Woods in the [Valero] Texas Open. His coach (who defeated Tiger Woods) and I played together in 1974 at the Orange Bowl in Miami. He played this year and did extremely well in the Orange Bowl—50 years later to the day. Who could tee that up? Who could tee that up but the Almighty himself. He didn't meet David Ogrin by accident. He met him by divine intervention.

And I am telling you, relationships are the key to tourism—educational tourism in Bermuda that happened in my constituency that I mentioned had BIOS, happened through relationships.

And when you look at Frascati Hotel that existed in Flatts that had a 9-hole golf course, right across from the Aquarium there. When I went over to the Aquarium and I was doing some research I looked and I saw the same educational connections that existed in

Flatts, transported down to St. George's there. And I went just two weeks ago to give a tribute and a funeral memorial service for the late Justice Dorothy Chin-Brandt at the Explorers Club there, and the CEO of the Explorers Club [saw I was] from Bermuda . . . We do charitable events at the Explorers Club with the Bermuda Aquarium.

And I am here to say that it is about relationships. And relationships are the cornerstone. And I say this with passion because I am a product of good relationships from a long time ago.

An Hon. Member: Yes, yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Walter King, Tokyo Mills, and I can call him Tokyo, the Honourable Member's father there, I can call him because when he was 50, he was mentoring me and he is still here at 100 as a testament to what I say, has credence and reason. And I am here to tell you, that this model does not have to come from a person with a PhD. But it can come from a person who has been trained and taught how to learn by persons with PhDs.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You know, when I speak about vision and the like when it comes to, in this case, tourism and development of people, I talk about . . . and people say, *Well, you are sticking that chest out. . . . Well, I am in reinsurance*. Well, I tell you, one of my mentors was a fellow called Jack Moseley from Baltimore, Maryland, who came out of Alabama, went to Auburn, and he took me under his wing back in 1983 and became my mentor. Google him. He was from the precursor of reinsurance. Reinsurance did not exist when USF&G [United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company] was the top insurance company in the entire United States with the Sugar Bowl and the New Orleans Open.

And they say, *Why do you talk about golf?* Because golf was the trade that educated me. And I got the education through people. Through people! And if we want to get more people in this country, if we want to get more bodies, we can do it. When? From November 1 to April 30 when hotels are under 50 per cent sold.

We might have a challenge getting, as the Minister can attest to better than me, more air lift here and the like. But you get the people interested, the demand, and the way to get them here will follow. And when I talk about Bermuda being the flagship in tourism, one hundred years ago there were not any planes flying, we had ships coming. They were coming right into St. George's, and they were going up into Hamilton.

What a country. My friend who came here last week could not believe that within 22 square miles we have everything per capita more than anywhere in the world. Three cruise ship ports within 22 miles. Three! And the opportunity in Bermuda is on the water. And that is for another motion to adjourn. And I declare my interest. I come from a family of fishermen, sailors, farmers, golfers and musicians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: All right!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Hayward. Would you like your 20 minutes?

BERMUDA STATUS AND GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT AGENDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to weigh in on a couple of topics that have been discussed in this House and within our community. The first being the topic regarding Bermuda status. I think as the Minister responsible for Immigration, it is important that I lend my voice to this conversation as it pertains to what this Government intends to do and what it does not intend to do.

Status and the granting of status is not a part of this Government's current agenda. The Government does not believe that granting status enables the level of economic sustainability that some are trying to suggest. We do understand that we have an ageing population, and our aim is to grow the working population to better support our ageing population. We have put out a number of position papers stating that.

I also want to add that when speaking with CEOs of companies within Bermuda, or organisations which represent industry in Bermuda, they have never articulated that granting of Bermuda status is a fundamental desire of theirs or is critical for the continued and effective operations of their business. So, if the Government does not believe that it is an economic imperative and the business community has not called for it and does not believe that it factors in their sustainable operations, one is left to conclude that the only reason why the Opposition is calling for this matter of status is to serve a political motive. Not an economic motive, not a sustainability motive of the Government, but a pure political motive. And I will leave that point there.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE—DATA DEEP DIVE

Hon. Jason Hayward: The second point I want to raise is a matter regarding the Chamber of Commerce and doing a deep dive into data. I am not going to continue with the back and forth as it pertains to whether or not the data is right or wrong. But if we are going to do a deep dive in this country as to the data in this country, we should do a deep dive into economic inequality in Bermuda and the root causes of that. Do a deep dive into pay disparities within companies in Bermuda. Do a

deep dive as to why Bermudians and non-Bermudians are being paid differently.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Do a deep dive into why males and females are paid differently. Do a deep dive as it pertains to Blacks and Whites being paid differently in the same occupational categories. We should also do a deep dive into the economic disparities.

We [should] do a deep dive into the hours that some of our non-Bermudian employees are required to work on a weekly basis. [We should] do a deep dive into the lack of benefits they receive. Let's do a deep dive into the employers who take employees' money for their benefits and then do not go and purchase that health insurance that the employee thought they had paid for.

See, there are a lot of things that we ought to be doing a deep dive into it. Let's do a deep dive as to the extent of institutionalised racism in Bermuda. Let's do a deep dive into why Bermudians are good enough to get into middle management positions but not good enough to get into senior management positions. Let's do a deep dive as it pertains to when work permits are submitted and a Bermudian is told that they don't fit or they are not a cultural fit; however, non-Bermudians are given the opportunity to . . . they want to determine whether or not a non-Bermudian is properly fit for the company.

There are a number of things that we need to address as a society. And so part of my role as the Minister of Economy and Labour when I put out the paper as it pertained to the retention of the local workforce and the expansion of the local workforce, and we were discussing initiatives around PRC [Permanent Resident Certificate], I got a lot of pushback as it pertains to extending of . . . lowering the eligibility requirements regarding PRC. And that pushback emanated from Bermudians who operate in a culture where they feel as though they are being stifled, oppressed and there is lack of opportunities.

I raise these concerns in meetings that I have had with industry. But we will not move forward with any proposals that give greater opportunities to non-Bermudians until our Bermudians feel comfortable with the fact that they are able to progress within organisations, that they are getting the same level of benefits and remunerations [as] their counterparts, when they feel as though there is equal access to opportunity.

And so, the Government will continue to work with industry to determine what we can do to ensure that Bermudians are availed of all of the opportunities that present themselves in Bermuda. We want to move forward with what I consider to be inclusive economic growth. We have had good GDP growth. We have seen our society progress. There is no doubt about that. All the external reports speak to our good governance. They speak to our economic sustainability. But what they do not speak to is the inclusiveness of our prosperity.

And we want to ensure that we bring Bermudians along on the journey and that they are not being left behind. But what we are finding with our studies is that people are determining that other domiciles provide more opportunity than Bermuda and are making the decision to emigrate. That is something that does not sit comfortable with this Government and it is something that we are going to address head on—the bottom line.

So, I do not want persons to believe that we see people leaving Bermuda and the Government is sitting back and is fine with that to continue. No, we put out a study to identify what the reasons are. And now we are going to do a deep review of what interventions can we actually put in place to mitigate future generations of Bermudians from emigrating and leaving this Island. We want Bermudians to know and always feel as though Bermuda is their home, they can return, and that is opportunities that exist for them. It is easier said than done, but that is a commitment from this Government.

IMMIGRATION AGENCIES AND PAPERWORK FOR WORK PERMITS

Hon. Jason Hayward: The last point that I want to discuss, and this is a very important point. It is a point regarding immigration. Oftentimes employers are relying on employment or immigration agencies to put in their paperwork for work permits and things of that nature. And the agencies are simply not putting in the individual's paperwork. So, I have had a number of employees and employers follow up with me regarding the status of their permits only to find that the immigration agency that they used has not submitted their paperwork. And so, when they start to talk about the Ministry and the Department of Immigration having a zero tolerance around infractions, what we are finding out is that a lot of the cause of the infractions are as a result of immigration agencies not meeting the expectations which are set out by their relationship with their clients.

Notwithstanding that, the law, Mr. Speaker, places liability on the employer and the employee. And so, I will ask for employers and employees to follow with their agents if they are not getting responses in a timely [manner] regarding the submission of their documents. Reach out directly to the Department of Immigration.

But if you find that your work permit has expired, there is no provision that allows you to continue to work without the permission of the Minister. And so, I am asking persons, if your permit has expired and you have reached out to your agent, and they are telling you that, *Oh, we are just waiting on a decision from Immigration, start work, you can come in and we can try to work to expedite getting you back into employment.* What we do not want to do is cripple economic activity in Bermuda. We want to ensure that we facilitate the

companies having the labour that they require so that they can be effective. That is a commonsense approach. It is a very measured approach. What we will continue to have is zero tolerance about . . . around persons who flagrantly disregard the immigration rules and laws.

I have to clarify my comments to persons who I have had interactions with this week because they were believing that Immigration is taking a hard approach. But there should be no soft approach to our laws. We have laws in place for them to be adhered to. We ask you to work within the provisions of our laws and our policies. And it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the laws are upheld. And that is what I will do for my remit as the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have a brief intervention this afternoon.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, [it is] much appreciated.

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

Any other Member?

None.

Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Oh, you are standing for me?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Oh, good.

Members, we now rise and adjourn today's session. We return next Friday, July 18.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Have yourself a good weekend and be safe.

[Gavel]

[At 4:16 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 18 July 2025.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
18 JULY 2025
10:04 AM

Sitting Number 17 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, Members. And some of you are looking so lovely today.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: So, we will have the prayers.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: You can be seated.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 11 July 2025]

The Deputy Speaker: We will start with the confirmation of Minutes for the [meeting] of 11 July 2025.

Are there any corrections, objections?

None.

Okay, thank you, Members.

[Minutes of 11 July 2025 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: Members the Honourable Speaker Dennis Lister, the Honourable Diallo Rabain and Member Linda Smith will be absent from the House today.

OMBUDSMAN FOR BERMUDA SPECIAL REPORT: BETWEEN A DOCK AND A HARD PLACE

AN INVESTIGATION INTO MARINE AND PORTS' FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT A PLANNING CONDITION FOR A MOORING REGISTRATION

The Deputy Speaker: Also, we have from the Ombudsman's Office for Bermuda—from the Ombudsman's Office, sorry, a Special Report—Between a Dock and a Hard Place: An Investigation into Marine and Ports' Failure to Implement a Planning Condition for a Mooring Registration.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Minister of Labour and Economy—or Economy and Labour.

Minister.

WAGE COMMISSION—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE IN BERMUDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Wage Commission—Recommendations for the Minimum Hourly Wage in Bermuda, June 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

You have another paper.

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION (PROHIBITION OF ENTRY) (NO. 2) ORDER 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Immigration and Protection (Prohibition of Entry) [(No. 2)] Order 2025 as made by the Minister responsible for Immigration, in exercise of power conferred by section 26(1) of the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Another paper. Yes.

EMPLOYMENT (MINIMUM HOURLY WAGE) AMENDMENT ORDER 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Employment (Minimum Hourly Wage) Amendment Order 2025 as made by the Minister responsible for Labour, in exercise of the power conferred by section 11 of the Employment (Wage Commission) Act 2019.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION—ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the Human Rights Commission—2024 Annual Report.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. That ends that.

PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are going to begin with the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Minister—you should be more appropriately attired in blue and blue.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am dressed in the attire of the Cup Match champions, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: May I proceed, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: You may.

BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, this morning I rise to advise this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda that later in today's sitting I will be tabling a Bill entitled the Beneficial Ownership Act 2025. This Bill supports the transfer of Bermuda's central register of beneficial ownership information from the Bermuda Monetary Authority to the Registrar of Companies.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill enhances Bermuda's current beneficial ownership regime in accordance with the revised Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendation 24 while consolidating the regime under the framework of a single Act. Reference is made to the Consultation Paper entitled *Bermuda's Central Register of Beneficial Ownership Information of Legal Persons* published by the Registrar of Companies in November 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, key components of this Bill are as follows:

- The Registrar of Companies will be appointed as the designate of the competent authority, the Minister of Finance, to hold and maintain the Central Register and to have such powers to discharge the functions conferred upon him by the Bill or Regulations made thereunder and issue and update any guidance relating to the Bill.
- The definition of "beneficial owner" has been broadened to apply to different categories of beneficial owners in order to better align with the revised Recommendation 24.
- The Registrar is empowered to disclose information on the Central Register to specified competent authorities and obliged entities for the purposes of exercising their statutory functions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill further provides that the Minister may make regulations providing for applications by beneficial owners [for] the suppressing of their information on the Central Register, for the reporting of discrepancies in beneficial ownership information by persons to whom the Registrar has disclosed such information, for actions to be taken by the Registrar following the receipt of a discrepancy report, and for the Registrar to control the issue and transfer of securities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to accommodate final stakeholder feedback during this period, floor amendments may be introduced during the second reading of the Bill. This will ensure that the final legislation reflects both technical requirements and practical considerations in advance of the launch of the Central Register. Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on or before 15 August 2025. Comments may be sent to the Regulatory, Enforcement and Policy Division, Registrar of Companies by email at rocpolicy@gov.bm.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

I call on the next Minister, Minister of Housing and Municipalities, the Deputy [Premier].

BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you very much. Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to provide an update on the Bermuda Land Management Corporation (BLMC). As Honourable Members may recall, I reported that the Bermuda Land Development Corporation (BLDC) would be fully dissolved by July 2025. Whilst we are very close to completion, this deadline will slip into August.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also remind Honourable Members and the public that BLMC is fully operational and is managing all properties and operations formerly overseen by WEDCO and BLDC.

In the west, BLMC continues to work along with the Ministry of Public Works on the current North Arm repairs for the Tugs berth. This project is ongoing, and the collective team is making progress while ensuring that there is as little impact as possible on the day-to-day operations at Kings Wharf and the transportation of its passengers. This has and continues to be a challenging task. At this time, I wish to thank all involved in the project repairs as well as those who provide transportation and other services to the ships at Kings Wharf.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the ongoing Marine and Ports facility upgrade is now nearing completion, and it is anticipated that their newly renovated and upgraded site will be fully handed over by the end of July. As a reminder to all, this project will see the Marine and Ports Dockyard operation located in the north Camber, relocated to the former Oracle sheds. However, Marine and Ports will continue to operate within the ramp area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the collective team of BLMC staff, Ministry of Public Works and Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sport, and in partnership with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings [(NCLH)]—continue to prepare and work together to be ready to embark on the planned major redevelopment project at King's Wharf Dock which will commence in October 2025 and conclude by March 2026.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the end of May, I reported that the BLMC was actively looking to find a positive solution for Daniels Head as it has sat vacant for many years. I am extremely pleased to report that BLMC has entered an MOU with NCLH to assess and evaluate the possibility of investing and potentially transforming this area into a first-class day tourism product.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot stress enough to all Honourable Members and the public that these discussions are in the beginning stages and, despite rumours that have recently begun to circulate, nothing has been signed off on or agreed to. BLMC has not issued a lease to run a private cruise passenger area or any other form of private resort.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I can share is that at this stage BLMC has signed a non-binding MOU [memorandum of understanding] that provides six months for NCLH to complete their vision and concept with high level financial requirements for us to consider. This opportunity is still in its very early stages, and conceptual designs and financial models have yet to be developed. I wish to inform Honourable Members and the public that should this development mature and move forward, stakeholder engagement will be a major part of the process, and I am committed to continuing to deliver updates via this Honourable House for this and any other potential projects.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I do wish to make clear is that my Ministry and the BLMC are committed to delivering a development for this site that will be a new first-class offering for Bermuda that considers and includes both the needs and requirements of the investor as well as the Bermuda community and incorporates Bermudian entrepreneurs and employees.

Madam Deputy Speaker, staying in the west, discussions continue that could potentially see the Victualling Yard buildings being brought back to life. Should this potential project take off, it will enable the only remaining BLMC historical structures to be brought back to life. At this stage it would be premature to provide any specific information as we still have a lot of work to do, but we are very hopeful that in the coming weeks and months we will be able to provide a more detailed update.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the east, the Water and Waste Infrastructure Project is in the final stages before going live and receiving St. George's waste and turning off the sewage outfall. Finally. Unfortunately, there were delays receiving the pumps and the final pump configurations at Market Square and King's Square are currently ongoing, and sewage transfer to Southside is anticipated to begin in August.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the transfer of 38 homes (as mentioned in my May update) from leasehold to freehold is actively underway with BLMC staff meeting [with] all lessees outlining the process and requirements. The legal firm Chancery Legal are now engaged so that we can complete this process as promised during this fiscal year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to also ensure the East End community that BLMC is also actively working on two initiatives. One with the Bermuda Housing Corporation to identify possible housing opportunities. And BLMC is currently in preliminary talks with a major local wholesaler and retailer about relocating their operations to the East End which would present additional commerce traffic within the area.

In closing, I wish to assure this Honourable House and the public that these updates will continue, and the Board and Management remain committed to delivering on their mandate.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the next Minister, the Minister for Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sports.

EMANCIPATION COMMEMORATION AND CUP MATCH 2025

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and good morning.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge one of the most defining moments in our collective history: the emancipation of our ancestors from the brutal system of slavery.

This year's emancipation commemoration theme, "Time Tells Our Truth: A Legacy of Freedom," as set by the Department of Culture, invites us to confront the realities of our past, honour the strength of those who came before us, and consider the legacy we continue to shape today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Emancipation Day holds deep historical and cultural meaning for Bermuda. It forms the foundation of our beloved Cup Match holiday, a two-day observance first established by the Friendly Societies in the aftermath of slavery. Today, Cup Match is marked by cricket, celebration, and community pride, but its roots remain grounded in our people's fight for justice, freedom, and dignity.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the first day of Cup Match is officially recognised as Emancipation Day, a public holiday dedicated to commemorating the abolition of slavery in Bermuda. On this day, we honour those who endured and resisted enslavement, and those who demanded better for future generations. The second day of the Cup Match holiday is Mary Prince Day, a tribute to one of Bermuda's most courageous activists and a beloved National Hero.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Mary Prince was born into enslavement and became the first woman of African descent to write an autobiography detailing the horrors of enslavement in the British Empire. Her narrative *The History of Mary Prince* gave powerful testimony to the lived realities of enslaved people and became a vital piece of the abolitionist movement. Through her words, she exposed injustice, shifted public sentiment, and helped move history. Her story still echoes today, not only as a record of the past but also as a reminder of truth-telling, which in itself is an act of resistance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Department of Culture has curated a calendar of events to mark the commemoration of emancipation. These events, organised in collaboration with community partners, provide a platform for education, reflection, and celebration. This is available to view on culture.bm.

Madam Deputy Speaker, among those events is one of our signature offerings: the Dr. Kenneth E. Robinson/Cyril Outerbridge Packwood Memorial Lecture, now in its 16th year. This annual lecture honours two of Bermuda's most respected Black historians and continues their mission of preserving and interpreting our history with care and integrity.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year's lecture will be delivered by Ms. Cheryl Packwood, a cultural advocate, legal scholar, and descendant of the Packwood family. Her talk is entitled "Unravelling the Narrative—A Critical Legal Study of the Institutionalisation of Slavery in Bermuda." Drawing from her recent research, Ms. Packwood will explore how systems of law and policy were used to legitimise and sustain slavery in Bermuda. She will offer a critical lens into the legal foundations of injustice and examine how those legacies still shape our society today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, commemorating emancipation is not just about remembering the past. It is about claiming the full truth of our history, and recognising the legacy of strength, courage, and resistance that we inherit. It is also about holding ourselves accountable to continue pushing for justice, equity, and dignity in every corner of our society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year's theme "Time Tells Our Truth: A Legacy of Freedom" is both a call and a challenge. The passage of time does not erase truth—it reveals it. And in telling that truth we honour our ancestors, we educate our children and shape a better future for generations yet to come.

Madam Deputy Speaker may this year's commemoration be one of reflection, recognition, and unity. May it inspire us to continue the work of freedom, not just in memory, but in action. And may we all enjoy a safe and joyous Cup Match filled with the spirit of community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on the sporting side of the upcoming Emancipation celebrations, in just two weeks, on 31 July and 1 August we will come together to celebrate a cherished and time-honoured tradition, a true reflection of the spirit of Bermuda, the Annual Cup Match Classic. This iconic event unites us as a community, transcending boundaries of age, race, and background, to revel in our shared love for cricket, camaraderie, and the vibrant culture that makes our Island so unique.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is truly the time of year when the spirit of rivalry and unity shines its brightest. You will see workplaces, you will see homes proudly adorned in light blue and dark blue—nobody in here I guess—light blue and dark blue—

Some Hon. Members: Yes!

Hon. Owen Darrell: —or red and blue—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and many dressed head to toe in their team colours. I thought I saw MP Ming here. Hmm.

[Laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: This is definitely the time of year where if you get caught wearing the wrong colours, you will be sure to be called out.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to express my gratitude to this year's host, the St. George's Cricket Club, under the leadership of president Mishael Paynter and his committee, organisers, sponsors, and countless volunteers who are working tirelessly to make this year's Cup Match possible.

Each year, the Government is pleased to provide a financial contribution to the host club to support their efforts in delivering this beloved national event—and this year, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be no different. We all look forward to the fun and rivalry of Cup Match, but the Government would like to also ensure that we celebrate safely.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to that end, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport will be providing funding to an engineering company to ensure that the scaffolding at the event has been professionally assessed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in addition to acknowledging the hard work of Mr. Paynter of St. George's Cricket Club, I would also like to thank the Somerset Cricket Club President, Mr. Richard Scott, and his team. Both of your clubs' dedication and commitment ensure this celebration remains a cherished highlight on our calendar.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I conclude it would be remiss of me if I did not highlight the much anticipated 27th Annual Mini Cup Match, hosted by the Bermuda Government. This celebrated event is scheduled to take place next Thursday, 24 July at Sea Breeze Oval, located on the grounds of Bailey's Bay Cricket Club. This year's match will see Somerset, the defending champions, facing off against St. George's at 10:30 am. The young athletes participating are aged 8 to 14 [and] have been diligently preparing over the last three weeks as part of the Department of Sport and Recreation's Next Innings Summer Day Camp. Their tradition has been guided by former Cup Match players Irving Romaine and Onias Bascome, alongside other dedicated staff members.

Madam Deputy Speaker, each year, Mini Cup Match not only brings joy and excitement but also provides a promising glimpse into the future of cricket in Bermuda. We are especially grateful for CG Insurance for once again sponsoring this annual classic and for their continued commitment to nurturing the sport amongst our young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we embark on this festive journey, let us embrace the spirit of Cup Match wholeheartedly. I would like to encourage the public to attend the last Cup Match trials at each club on Saturday, 26 July, and stay for the exciting selection process that evening.

Also, Colt Cup Match will follow on Sunday, 27 July at 11:00 am, also at St. George's Cricket Club where you can witness the up-and-coming players as they take on each other. I look forward to the Cup Match trials and stopping in on my fellow Bermudians setting up their camps over the next two weeks.

The first day of Cup Match will mark my third time as Minister participating in the special pregame moment of greeting players and officials just before the coveted first ball. I am honoured to be a part of this year's game and know that this festive event symbolises the bonds that tie us together, connected through heritage, pride, and unity. It is a time when families, friends, and even strangers come together to create lasting memories, forming connections that withstand the test of time.

Happy Cup Match to all!

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister, and before you do your next paper—Minister, you have the next Statement, correct?

Hon. Owen Darrell: I do, Madam Deputy Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR MEMBER PRESIDING

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: Before you do that, I would like to recognise in the Gallery the Senator for the OBA, Mr. Maurice Foley. He should be wearing gold and blue.

[Desk thumping and laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think you are taking it a little far. Blue and white would suffice. We will leave it there.

[Laughter]

[Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers, continuing]

SHORELINK: LAUNCH OF PHASE 2

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, today I rise with enthusiasm to share a significant and forward-looking update with this Honourable House, one that marks a bold step in the Government's mission to modernise Bermuda's public transportation system. At the heart of this progress is our Digital Fare Media (DFM) initiative, and I am proud to announce that we are now on the cusp of launching Phase 2: Real-Time Information (RTI), a game-changer that will bring immediate, practical benefits to the daily lives of Bermuda and her commuters.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as previously announced, the Real-Time Information feature of the ShoreLink platform will officially launch on Tuesday, 5 August 2025. But let me be clear, this is far more than just another product rollout. This is the activation of a transformative service, one that has been thoughtfully designed, rigorously tested, and carefully refined over

the course of several months through a strong collaboration between our dedicated public officers and our committed technology partners.

This launch represents a major leap forward in how we serve the public. It brings to life the vision of smarter, more connected, and more responsive public transportation. With the introduction of real-time updates, Bermuda's commuters will for the first time have immediate, accurate information at their fingertips, allowing them to plan their journeys with confidence, reduce waiting times, and experience public transport the way it should be: modern, efficient, and reliable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not just a new feature . . . it's a powerful signal of progress. Madam Deputy Speaker, since I last reported to this House, the Ministry, supported by the Information and Digital Technologies (IDT) Department, and in coordination with technical teams across government, has achieved key milestones in preparation for this launch.

- All routers have been installed within 96 buses and all seven ferries.
- Technical fixes implemented to ensure accurate vehicle tracking and schedule alignment.
- Real-time monitoring tools established, enabling staff to log issues and support service reliability.
- Training activities underway to prepare frontline and administrative users for live operations.

As of June 22, the Digital Fare Media project has achieved the following: [There were] 22,946 new users (including both registered and anonymous customer accounts). Total sales of BMD$811,854. Compared to my last report in this House: [There were] 16,851 new users. Total sales of $579[,000]. So, you see a significant increase, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the continued growth in the use of the ShoreLink service is both clear and compelling as it stands as a strong testament to its success in meeting the real, everyday needs of Bermudians. This upward trend reflects not only increasing demand but also growing trust in ShoreLink as a reliable, convenient and accessible transportation option. It is a signal that the service is resonating with the public and is playing a vital role in enhancing mobility across the Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this project has demonstrated the value of cross-departmental coordination, and I wish to express thanks to all who have supported its progress. In particular, I acknowledge the input of staff at the Department of Public Transportation and the Department of Marine and Ports Services, both of which have engaged in early-stage training, provided route data and assisted with testing activities. While implementation work continues in both areas, their participation thus far has contributed to system alignment. Special thanks are also due to IDT, whose technical support has been essential in configuration, user access and backend management.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this project has truly demonstrated the whole of government cooperation. Our technical partners—including goPoint, Paragon ID, Hubup and AirWeb—have worked closely with officers across multiple departments to troubleshoot challenges, implement fixes and prepare the system for public use.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry will soon launch a public information campaign to ensure that residents and visitors alike know exactly how to make the most of the ShoreLink app and the website. Through engaging video tutorials, step-by-step help guides and live support, we will make sure that everyone, whether commuting across the Island or navigating our waters, is fully equipped to access real-time transport updates with confidence and ease.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while Phase 2 is about to go live the work will not stop there. We are steadily advancing towards Phase 3, which will introduce contactless card payments. Integration is already underway, and soon passengers will be able to tap their debit or credit cards right on board; no tickets, no fuss, just a seamless, cash-free experience. This upgrade will not only enhance convenience but place Bermuda's transport system in line with global standards. With the Real-Time Information system launching in just two weeks' time, Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda is on the verge of a major leap forward in public transportation. This is not just about buses and ferries, it is about building a smarter, more connected Bermuda. It is a testament to good governance, effective collaboration and our keen focus on delivering a transport system that works for today and is ready for tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the Minister for Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

ZONE-IN AND ZONE-OUT SESSIONS 2024-2025

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As another school year has concluded, I am happy to rise today in this Honourable House to speak about the work of the Office of Youth Affairs [TOYA] to ensure that this Government is responsive to Bermuda's youth. Through the Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions, TOYA has garnered feedback directly from young people who expressed their viewpoints on varied aspects of their community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the growth of our young people today [is] different from previous generations. There are similarities, yes. They have some of the same needs, yes. However, their interests are different, their responses to challenges are not the same and their approach and expectations from life are diverse. We cannot use the same methodology and approach we did to engage young people as we did 10 or

20 years ago. We must evolve as they have. The questions then become, how do we best respond to their evolving needs? How do we know what their issues and challenges are that we may be the most effective in supporting them?

To obtain answers to these questions, Madam Deputy Speaker, one must go directly to the source. The Office of Youth Affairs understands this, which is why Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions were devised; to directly and strategically engage with young people. In these sessions, young people [were] asked not only what their issues and concerns were, but also why they feel that way and what potential solutions could be implemented. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Zone-In sessions are held during the months of September and October. As Minister responsible for Youth, I travelled alongside TOYA's Youth Development Team to schools across the Island at middle, senior and tertiary levels.

Our aims were to introduce the National Youth Policy Working Group members, provide updates on the goals of the National Youth Policy, while also garnering feedback on those same goals. While we did ask questions of students, they were given the opportunity to ask questions. Madam Deputy Speaker, I was struck by their candidness, passion and insightfulness. I found the discussions enlightening as they discussed their school workloads and its impact on their mental health. Conversations on the need for financial literacy and education at younger ages were inspirational as they showed understanding of the impact of such on their futures. These conversations are so very necessary. It is not enough to only provide a space for young people to express their views; we must also listen, truly hear what is on their hearts and minds, and then we must act.

Our young people demand action, Madam Deputy Speaker. We heard it at the National 18+ Youth Conference in July of last year, we heard it at the Consultation 2 Conference in April of this year and we are hearing it from our young people in our schools. Young people are looking to us to act on their concerns, and we must be ready to respond. Madam Deputy Speaker, conversations like what took place are the fuel that drives the Office of Youth Affairs. They are the inspiration for events, programmes and workshops that the TOYA team puts together. This is the action that young people are looking for, and they can expect the TOYA team to deliver.

Events like this also build trust with the younger generation, for as young people have said several times to TOYA staff and youth workers in other organisations as well, this is a generation that does not put a lot of trust in adults, and it is only through our actions that we can build and rebuild trust.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we approached the end of the school year, before students left for the summer, the TOYA Youth Development Team left their offices once again to check in with students at their schools for the Zone-Out sessions. The intention was the same: to gain feedback on the goals of the National Youth Policy and identify any other areas of concern. Information from these conversations were used as topics of discussion at the National 18+ Youth Conference and other events.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the students who participated in the Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions. They shared their time and unfiltered opinions with us. It is my hope that they will continue to feel empowered to share their views and experiences of life in Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of myself and the Office of Youth Affairs, I want to thank the schools that participated in the Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions over the last academic year. We appreciate them opening their doors to us, adjusting their schedules and ensuring young people were present to share their views with us.

The schools that participated were:

- The Berkeley Institute;
- CedarBridge Academy;
- Bermuda Institute;
- Warwick Academy;
- Bermuda High School for Girls;
- Dellwood Middle School;
- Sandys Secondary Middle School;
- Somersfield Academy;
- Whitney Institute Middle School.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank the TOYA Youth Development Team. They take their mantle of developing and empowering Bermuda's youth seriously, and I wish to praise them for their commitment and creativity in executing their work. Through their Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions, they are helping to create the next generation of responsible citizens who participate willingly in civic engagement activities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, Bermuda's youth are creative, sensitive, insightful, caring and energetic. As a Government, we are duty-bound to help them grow into the best possible versions of themselves. What that image looks like should be co-created by those who make the decisions and those who will be impacted. I am confident that by ensuring that young people and the Government work together, we can create the best version of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I believe you have another [Statement]?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION—2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased today to lay before this Honourable House the Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission for the year ending 31 December 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Human Rights Commission has a statutory remit to protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act 1981. The Commission's mandate involves education, the promotion of principles of non-discrimination and equality and to investigate and endeavour to settle allegations of discrimination.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Executive Officer of the Commission screens and investigates alleged contraventions of the Act, provides assistance to those who believe they have experienced discrimination, or assists those who have questions related to rights and obligations under the Human Rights Act. The Commission is both a public watchdog for human rights compliance and a resource to foster and promote human rights principles by working with stakeholders across the Island, inclusive of the Government, employers, service providers, landlords, community organisations, schools and individuals.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Commission works to further its objective of eradicating discrimination through the following means:

- addressing all queries related to rights in Bermuda;
- screening and investigating complaints of discrimination under the Human Rights Act 1981;
- providing dispute resolution services through mediation to help settle complaints of discrimination;
- referring meritorious complaints to the Human Rights Tribunal;
- reviewing policies and providing guidance with all stakeholders in support of human rights obligations;
- engaging in collaborative presentations, research and educational programming;
- facilitating and participating in consultations to support the evolution of human rights in Bermuda;
- providing educational presentations, workshops and training tailored to meet stakeholder needs in support of their human rights education and compliance commitments;
- providing recommendations to the Government on proposed legislative amendments to ensure consistency with international standards;
- supporting the independence of the Selection and Appointment Committee and the Human Rights Tribunal;
- providing guidance to the Government, organisations, businesses and educational institutions on the development and implementation of a human rights-based approach to legislation, policies, programmes and complaint handling mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Act and international human rights agreements.

Madam Deputy Speaker, included in the Annual Report, you will note that during the 2024 calendar year the Commission received 179 intakes, which account for both complaints and queries. The Commission observed significant increases in intakes that appeared to contravene the Act, with a higher volume of matters advancing through the complaint handling stages, in contrast to previous years. Of the total intakes received in 2024, Madam Deputy Speaker, 16 per cent remain ongoing, as the remaining 84 per cent have been resolved. The intakes primarily identified discriminatory treatment based on the protected ground relating to,

- disability at 17 per cent;
- sex at 15 per cent; and
- ethnic or national origins, which accounted for 14 per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, within the protected areas of discrimination, 27 per cent of the intakes received related to concerned alleged contraventions of section 6(1) of the Act. The protected area of workplace harassment contrary to section 6B(1) of the Act accounted for 17 per cent of intakes, followed by allegations of discrimination within the provision of goods, facilities and services, accounting for 15 per cent of intakes received.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Annual Report further states that 68 per cent of the intakes received concerned employment and/or the workplace. This total combined matters under the protected areas in the Act, such as section 6, section 6B, section 9 and matters that came to the Commission which were identified as being employment related. The complaints field included various individuals reporting that they were sexually harassed within the workplace, were denied employment because of a criminal record, were terminated because of their family status and experienced discriminatory treatment with respect to pay because of their place of origin and/or ethnic or national origins.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on March 21, 2024, the Commission hosted the "What Can I Do? What Can We Do?" conference, a day dedicated to learning, connection and collective action to protect and promote human rights in Bermuda. In June of 2024, the Commission launched a public consultation to gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of people with disabilities. The consultation was designed to hear from people with disabilities, their families, disability advocates and support services and members of the public. It was aimed to create a platform for sharing experiences and highlighting the barriers faced while navigating life in Bermuda. And in October 2024, the Commission acknowledged the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Bermuda.

Lastly, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Annual Report highlighted that Palestine continued to feature among the work of the Commission as the ongoing genocide against Palestinians continued in 2024. The Commission joined the Peace March [Walk for Palestine] and the gathering on Cabinet grounds, coinciding with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, emphasising the need for vigilance in protecting rights.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the Officers of the Commission under the leadership of the Executive Officer for their steadfastness and commitment to the work of the Human Rights Commission. I invite this Honourable House to read the Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission and become informed about the engagements, educational activities and accomplishments that the Commission was involved in during 2024. Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to inform the listening public that the Selection and Appointment Committee of the Human Rights Commission is receiving applications to serve as Human Rights Tribunal Panel Members. More information about this can be found at www.humanrights.bm.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, and in accordance with section 30A of the Human Rights Act 1981, I now lay before this Honourable House the Human Rights Commission Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2024.

Thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the next Minister, the Minister of National Security.

Minister.

NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, [Madam Deputy] Speaker. Good morning, colleagues and the listening public.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda of the ongoing work being done under the National Violence Reduction Strategy and, in particular, the financial support we have provided to community-based organisations that are contributing meaningfully to violence prevention, intervention and rehabilitation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as outlined in the National Violence Reduction Strategy, we are committed to a multifaceted approach to reducing violence in our community, particularly gang and youth violence, by addressing root causes and investing in prevention. This includes strengthening community resilience, increasing access to mental health services, enhancing early intervention and promoting positive alternatives for our young people.

To that end, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of National Security has disbursed grant funding totalling more than $540,000 to a range of community-based organisations whose missions align with the goals of the strategy. These organisations include sports clubs, community support programmes, youth mentorship groups and education-focused initiatives. This funding reflects a collective effort across many community organisations, and I will speak to the types of initiatives it is helping to advance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the largest portion of the grant funding, approximately $288,000, has gone to sports clubs across the Island. These grants support structured programmes that engage young people in positive, skill-building activities and provide safe spaces for recreation, mentorship and community building. These clubs are not just centres for athletic excellence. They are hubs of leadership development, social connection and resilience. As the strategy highlights, involvement in organised sports can reduce idle time, foster positive peer networks and increase a sense of purpose among our youth.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another $135,000 has been allocated to community support organisations that provide critical services ranging from transitional housing to trauma-informed care. These groups work directly with individuals and families affected by violence and provide a bridge to stability through counselling, case management and basic needs support. Their contributions are essential in the rehabilitation and reintegration goals of our strategy.

We have also invested more than $84,000 in education-centred initiatives, including those focused on academic support and skills development. Educational opportunity is a powerful protective factor against violence. By funding programmes that offer tutoring, career planning and vocational exposure, we are supporting the long-term success of young people who might otherwise be vulnerable to antisocial influences.

And finally, nearly $35,000 has been dedicated to youth mentorship programmes that foster positive identity, self-confidence and leadership skills. These initiatives often pair young people with trusted adult mentors who provide consistent guidance, encouragement and a listening ear. Research shows that these relationships can have a lasting impact on a young person's ability to make positive life choices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, each of these grants is more than a financial transaction. It is a strategic investment in peace building. These community-based programmes align with our National Strategy's emphasis on prevention, intervention and integration. They represent our belief that the people closest to the problems are also closest to the solutions. Violence prevention is not the work of Government alone. It is a shared responsibility that requires us to work hand in hand with the community. Through these grants, we are resourcing trusted partners to do what they do best: engage hearts, change minds and build a safer Bermuda from the ground up.

Looking ahead, the Ministry of National Security remains committed to strengthening and expanding these partnerships. We are actively reviewing the outcomes of funded programmes to inform future funding cycles, with a focus on sustainability, evidence-based practices and measurable impact. We are also exploring opportunities to support new and emerging community efforts, particularly those that address mental health, education access, mentorship and trauma-informed care. In the months to come, we will be engaging stakeholders in a broader conversation about how to deepen coordination across agencies, expand public awareness of violence prevention resources and ensure that young people, especially those at most risk, have clear and supported pathways to success.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank all of the organisations who have applied for, and received, funding. Their commitment to uplifting their communities is commendable. The Ministry of National Security will continue to monitor the impact of these grants and ensure that public funds are used effectively and responsibly to support the national mission of violence reduction.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I do believe you have a second [Statement] as well.

ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT—SUMMER UPDATE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, ma'am.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet, I would like to provide this Honourable House with a comprehensive update on the commendable work and recent achievements of the Royal Bermuda Regiment (RBR) and the Coast Guard Unit, highlighting their unwavering dedication to leadership, youth development and maritime safety.

Madam Deputy Speaker, from June 1 to June 14, the Regiment conducted the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre Camp at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This challenging and essential leadership course, held for the first time in three years, equips our future leaders with the necessary skills to effectively command a section of eight soldiers. This year, 18 dedicated Royal Bermuda Regiment students participated alongside four soldiers from the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment and one from the Cayman Islands Regiment, reflecting Bermuda's pivotal role in regional cooperation and training.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in our continued commitment to fostering the next generation of leaders, from June 27 to July 4 the Regiment hosted two highly successful youth camps involving a total of 40 young Bermudians. The Junior Leader Programme saw 24 enthusiastic middle and high school students participate in a rigorous seven-day residential camp, divided into junior and senior cohorts. Our young leaders undertook foot drills, weapons training and a memorable overnight exercise. The senior cohort also experienced live-fire exercises, and both groups proudly showcased their discipline in a drill display at the Passing Out Parade attended by families and honoured by the presence of our Junior Minister of National Security, Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Simultaneously, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Regiment's Band hosted a vibrant Junior Band Camp, attended by 16 talented students aged between 11 and 25. Guided by the band's own dedicated college students—Gabriella Arnold, Isaiah Hayward, Samuel Webel, and Jesaiah Talbot—and supported by experienced Royal Bermuda Regiment Band Corporals Hall, Dowling, Smith and Morrisey, the camp provided invaluable developmental opportunities for potential conductors and drum majors. Their impressive performance at the Junior Leader Camp Passing Out Parade and the Sunset Ceremony culminated in an inspiring Beating of the Retreat on Cabinet grounds on July 16.

Madam Deputy Speaker, immediately following these youth initiatives the Regiment commenced its second recruit intake of the year on July 6, welcoming 36 new recruits: 12 from our local community and 24 from the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment (TCIR). The Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment actively expanding its ranks sought our assistance, which we readily provided due to historically lower numbers during our summer intake. I must stress, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Turks and Caicos [Islands] fully funded their own participation. Upon completion of the initial camp on July 18 the Royal Bermuda Regiment recruits will enter a three-month continuation training course before joining operational units this autumn increasing the Regiment's active strength to 283 personnel.

Turning now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to our maritime guardians, the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard Unit. This dedicated team of 14 full-time and 22 reserve soldiers is fully mobilised for robust summer operations reinforcing weekend and holiday shifts to maximise visibility and enhance response capabilities during peak boating periods. In June alone, the Coast Guard conducted 136 patrols, observed 2,804 vessels, issued 23 marine regulation tickets, made four arrests and successfully completed 10 search and rescue operations. Additionally, they partnered with Police and Customs in two joint operations and supported the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on two occasions, further underscoring their critical interagency collaboration.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in a significant advancement, the Coast Guard recently commissioned three state of the art forward-looking infrared cameras, enhancing nighttime fisheries and rescue operational capabilities. These high-resolution, heat-sensing cameras, valued at a combined total of $172,000, were funded by the UK's [Maritime and] Coastguard Agency

and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's [Blue Belt Shield Project].

While we celebrate these successes, Madam Deputy Speaker, we must acknowledge ongoing challenges. The Coast Guard's fleet of 11 vessels, primarily composed of ageing former police boats, restricts its operational efficiency due to limitations in endurance, sea state performance and crew protection. Addressing this remains an urgent priority, as does increasing the unit's capability. Concerted efforts are underway to double the size of the Coast Guard Unit from 14 to 28 full-time soldiers. Achieving this expansion will provide sustainable operational coverage, alleviate over-reliance on reserve personnel and ensure continuous professional training.

Additionally, the forthcoming Coast Guard Station at the former St. David's Post Office, projected for completion by mid-December, will significantly boost operational presence in the East End. This new facility will reduce response times for eastern search-and-rescue operations, enhance oversight of fishing activities, expedite customs procedures in St. George's and strengthen emergency responses to aircraft incidents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government remains committed to supporting the men and women of the Regiment and the Coast Guard as they tirelessly safeguard our Island and inspire our youth. These achievements and ongoing dedication deserve our collective recognition and support. I encourage all Bermudians, particularly our young people, to consider joining the Royal Bermuda Regiment. Service in the Regiment promises not only the chance to develop exceptional leadership abilities and contribute meaningfully to our community, but also offers unmatched opportunities for personal adventure. Members experience tactical training, achieve peak physical fitness, sharpen their mental acuity and have the opportunity to travel and engage in unique, rewarding experiences. We look forward to welcoming new members to our proud tradition of service and excellence.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the Minister for Economy and Labour.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, Minister.

Minister, you have the floor. Yes.

MINIMUM WAGE FOR BERMUDA ADVANCING A FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE MINIMUM WAGE

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to this Honourable House today the Wage Commission's Report on Recommendations for the Minimum Hourly Wage in Bermuda. This report marks a pivotal step in our ongoing commitment to ensuring a dignified standard of living for all Bermuda's workers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am also pleased to lay in the Honourable House of Assembly the Employment (Minimum Hourly Wage) Amendment Order 2025, which reflects the recommendation by the Wage Commission to increase the statutory minimum hourly wage rate, effective from 1 September 2025. Madam Deputy Speaker, Members of this Honourable House may recall that in September 2024, I presented the Government's Position Paper on Progressing Bermuda's Minimum Hourly Wage Rate from the current rate of $16.40 to a rate between $16.81 and $17.23 in 2025. The Paper underscored the Government's unwavering commitment to advancing the minimum hourly wage, initially enacted on 1 June 2023, and proposed a clear framework for its progression.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Wage Commission, in accordance with its obligations under sections 9 and 10 of the Employment (Wage Commission) Act 2019, has affirmed the Government's position in this regard. Crucially, the Commission has recommended that the statutory minimum hourly wage rate be increased in 2025 to $17.13. This adjustment is not merely an incremental change; it is a vital investment in our society and economy. A minimum wage that keeps pace with the cost of living is fundamental to ensuring that full-time work provides a pathway out of poverty, rather than trapping individuals in it. This progressive approach helps to reduce reliance on social safety nets and builds a more resilient economy from the ground up.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is anticipated that more than 2,500 workers will benefit from this adjustment, primarily those in the service and sales sectors. These workers include individuals employed in hotels and restaurants, retail workers, personal care workers, cleaners, beauticians and domestic workers. Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, this position aligns directly with international best practices and the principles advocated by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO consistently emphasises that minimum wages should be reviewed and adjusted periodically to ensure they provide a living wage, taking into account the evolving cost of living, social security and prevailing wage levels. Their conventions and recommendations highlight that fair minimum wages are essential for decent work, social protection and inclusive economic development. They play a critical role in reducing inequality and enhancing social cohesion.

The Commission's Report states that the minimum hourly wage rate should be progressed by the annual rate of inflation, using the Consumer Price Index as the indicative measure, capped at 2.5 per cent per year, every two years. Taking the annual average rate of inflation for 2023 and 2024 of 3.3 per cent and

1.9 [per cent], respectively, the Wage Commission proposes a statutory minimum hourly wage rate of $17.13, an increase of $0.7 per hour from the current rate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Commission's Report recommends that the statutory minimum hourly wage rate be reviewed every two years, utilising information from the annual Employment Survey as well as the Labour Force Survey. As the Commission notes, the biennial review will minimise potential business disruptions and afford employers an opportunity to ". . . adjust their operations and pricing strategies, accordingly, mitigating any adverse effects on employment levels or business viability." Moreover, knowing that wage adjustments will occur every two years based on an objective economic indicator allows for better long-term planning and budgeting for businesses and households alike.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the distinguished members of the Wage Commission. Their unwavering commitment has been instrumental in ensuring a basic standard of living for the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And that concludes Ministerial Statements.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make this comment: We have written questions. However, due to electronic malfunctions the ministries did not receive the first set of five questions on the paper, and therefore we are unable to address them at this time. [These have] been carried over to September. The respective Whips were asked to inform their Members.

That brings us to Minister Lightbourne.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just one quick question for your indulgence, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have a question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I just want to be sure, have the questions then been forwarded on to the Ministers?

The Deputy Speaker: It is my understanding that that is the case. The Ministers have received the questions.

That moves us to Minister Alexa Lightbourne. And these are oral questions. Member Fahy would like to ask you questions.

QUESTION 1: CARICOM MEMBERSHIP GREEN PAPER

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

Question one, [Madam Deputy] Speaker, is would the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House the date upon which a Green Paper will be published on full CARICOM membership for Bermuda?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the listening audience.

The Government intends to publish a discussion paper on Bermuda's application for full membership in the Caribbean community in the first quarter of 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other questions?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Given that the Green Paper is to be published in the first quarter of next year, has there been any preliminary work in reaching out to potential stakeholders, such as international business, that could assist in a publication of a Green Paper in the first quarter of next year? Thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been consistent with the response, that is, to confirm that the Ministry upon receipt of a draft membership agreement will review it. And based on the content and components of which are included that will form the basis of a discussion paper and the subsequent consultation.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Yes, so for clarity, the answer to that question with the first supplementary would be *no*. Is that correct?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I will re-state the response to question one and question two, as applicable.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Any further questions?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Second question.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: CARICOM MEMBER STATES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Would the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House under what circumstances the Government of Bermuda would consent to the free movement of nationals of CARICOM member states to Bermuda?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, the free movement of nationals of Caribbean member states does not exist. Accordingly, it is not contemplated that such a provision will be included in Bermuda's CARICOM membership negotiations.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Any supplemental to that?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Yes, please. The Treaty of Chaguaramas, Article 45, says it is the goal of CARICOM members to engage in free movement. Of which, despite what some may say, can be a very good thing for Bermuda. So, let us make that clear in relation to my question.

In the last major meeting, heads of states in CARICOM, pursuant to Article 45 there are now four states that are engaging in free movement of persons. That is Belize, Dominica, Barbados and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That is why I am asking the question. The Barbados—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, I am going to ask the question in a moment.

The Deputy Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Hon. Michael Fahy: With that in the background, in relation to free movement it would appear that there is movement in this for free movement of persons who are members, where countries are members of CARICOM. Again, is there any circumstance upon which the Government would accept that free movement of persons is actually beneficial to Bermuda?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I want to first thank the Honourable Member for his indirect support for a potential CARICOM full membership.

However, the contents of the draft membership agreement and the provisions to include free movement would not be explicitly as presented and so that is why my response is that it does not exist. But there are skilled labour and other categories which would include free—or it is stress-free—travel for those who wish to visit other CARICOM states for leisure, et cetera. And so those are the types of provisions that are included in the CSME [CARICOM Single Market and Economy].

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Do you have a second supplemental?

Hon. Michael Fahy: I do, thank you.

As of 1 October 2025, the four countries that I made mention of will have more than just certain rights, they will have free movement of persons, rights to healthcare, rights to education. Again, what the Bajan ambassador to CARICOM has recently said is that this type of arrangement is very beneficial to Barbados because they require about 100,000 more workers for a successful economy. This Government said 8,000.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael Fahy: So again, under what circumstances do we think that that is appropriate for Bermuda, to engage in free movement to boost our economic growth?

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, the Honourable Member is speaking to the negotiations that Barbados would have engaged in, and likewise Bermuda will have similar negotiations that will be appropriate once the draft membership agreement has been shared from the Secretariat.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Third question.

The Deputy Speaker: Your third question?

QUESTION 3: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Would the Honourable Minister please advise whether the Government of Bermuda will put the question of full CARICOM membership to the people of Bermuda via referendum?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, any decision related to CARICOM membership will include meaningful public engagement and brought to this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, the answer is *no*. Is that correct?

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a supplemental question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: I said, [Madam Deputy] Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: That is a comment.

Hon. Michael Fahy: No, I said, *the answer is "no," is that correct?*

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, any decision related to CARICOM membership will include meaningful public engagement and brought to this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental?

Hon. Michael Fahy: I think the Minister has made the position clear of *no*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

The Opposition Leader likewise has . . . oh, sorry. Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry. I'm moving ahead of myself.

Continuing with Question Period.

I think you . . . continuing, [Member] Doug DeCouto has questions for the Premier.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My questions are with respect to the Statement on the beneficial ownership registry.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 1: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: My first question is with respect to that, given the additional duties being taken on by the Registrar of Companies, and I happen to know that in the past they have been quite strapped for resources, people and money. Can the Premier please advise what specific additional resources will be provided to the Registrar so they can successfully carry out this function?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is incorrect in the basis of his answer to the question. He just stated in the record that the Registrar of Companies has been strapped for money. That is false and incorrect, as budget statements would indicate, the funding for the Registrar of Companies over the last—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, I'm answering the question.

An Hon. Member: Point of order?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Let's let the Minister finish his answer and then.

Hon. E. David Burt: As the record would reflect, as we have debated in this House during Committee of Supply, the budget for the Registry of Companies has about doubled in the last two years. So, it is not correct to say that they were strapped for funding.

Some Hon. Members: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: As was stated during the Committee of Supply, additional funding has been granted to the Registrar of Companies this year in anticipation of the transferring of these functions which was debated in the Committee of Supply. Those matters were set out, are a matter of public record, and if the Honourable Member wishes to recall those particular discussions, I will refer him to Hansard where [he] and I discussed these matters during the Committee of Supply.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh-oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Member? Yes.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Additional questions. But as a clarifying comment, I believe I have talked about—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —in the past, or at times—

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And that has been based on actual conversations with members of the ROC. So, with respect to the Premier, he is inadvertently mistaken, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Do you have a supplemental?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Ah, no, I have a second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, second question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: No supplemental

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I note in the Statement that they are tabling the Bill now to come when we resume in September and they are anticipating potential floor amendments during the second reading. While I appreciate that that is to undertake consultation, which we certainly would support, my question is, Why must the Bill be tabled today?

It would certainly be preferable if—

An Hon. Member: We are the Government; we can do whatever we want.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: It would certainly be preferable that the Bill was tabled in its full and final form so that we could all appreciate the full details and particulars of the Bill to be prepared for the debate.

An Hon. Member: Is there a question?

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I repeat my question: What is the purpose of tabling the Bill today rather than when it has all the full and final details?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministerial Statement in which I gave, details the particulars and the answer to this question.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Premier.
Do you have a supplemental to that?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, it is supplemental. But, in fact, the Statement does not state why it must be tabled today versus on our first day back in September. And so, again, the Premier is inadvertently mistaken.

The Deputy Speaker: Question?

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Just because he says something doesn't make it correct.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. You have a supplemental?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But I do have a third question, Madam—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: Your third question?

QUESTION 3: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Statement does allude to there may be provisions that will allow members or companies on the register to have certain information suppressed. Perhaps the Premier could outline for us what are the conditions, what kinds of information or what kinds of situations or applications of those provisions, would be?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I would refer the Honourable Member to the consultation document published by the Registrar of Companies in November 2024 where he can get all these specific answers. Those matters are in the public domain.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Premier.

Do you have a supplemental?

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Member, do you have a supplemental? No?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I do have a clarifying question, because of course—

Some Hon. Members: No!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam, for the purpose of the record—

The Deputy Speaker: So, do you have . . . you have a . . . you want to give me a point of clarification—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, a point of clarification.

The Deputy Speaker: —on something that you previously stated?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: A point of clarification. I offer a point of clarification.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, to what?

[Crosstalk]

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, of course, we do not know the Statements ahead of time and we did not know the reports. So, I am asking for the record here today, things related to the Statement which would include what would be some of the applications of these—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, so that is—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —of these features of the Bill that are—

The Deputy Speaker: —that is your—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —that are specifically called out in the Statement.

The Deputy Speaker: That is your clarification. So, is that a supplemental question? Okay.

Can you repeat the question that you just made at the end?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, given that the Statement specifically—

The Deputy Speaker: All right.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —called out parts of the Bill that could perhaps have people suppress—

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —information on the register, can the Premier provide an outline of some of the applications of those provisions?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Premier.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you Premier.

I have . . . the Opposition Leader also has questions for you.

QUESTION 1: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Good morning to you. Good morning to my colleagues and the listening audience. Good morning.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these regulations and policies do have some fairly significant impacts into the community, including it can sometimes lead to "debanking" people. In other words, banking and financial services will not be provided. It is the downstream consequences of a fairly nebulous and technical policy area. So, I have some questions for the Premier, specifically starting with, What specific deficiencies, if any, were identified in the BMA's [Bermuda Monetary Authority] handling of the central registrar that has prompted this change?

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a matter that has been discussed in this House, discussed multiple times during budget sessions, subject

of ongoing consultation. The Honourable Member knows quite well there was a goal to remove double vetting, to centralise the register into one place. They are now, because we know that things have to be vetted by the Registrar of Companies into BMA, we move the central register into one place, into the Registrar of Companies.

There is no matter, issue, or deficiency. It is a policy decision that is been made by this Government, supported by the former Government, and it is something that has long been awaited for us to progress through to eliminate the double vetting. There is nothing in regard to any shortcomings at the Bermuda Monetary Authority. And I would refer the Honourable Member to the consultation paper which was done in November 2024.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Do you have a supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you. Thank you.

Given that the definition of beneficial ownership will be broadened, and as it stands in Bermuda right now we have two specific regulations dealing with beneficial ownership and a third practice under our foreign exchange control regulations So, effectively in Bermuda there are three definitions of beneficial ownership. How will the broadened definition be interpreted or will it synthesise all three issues as it stands?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Ministerial Statement that I gave, we will be centralising beneficial ownership matters into one Act. And in regard to the definition of beneficial ownership, we are required to adhere to international standards, and they are being done in accordance with FATF (that is, Financial Action Task Force) Recommendation 24, which I am sure the Honourable Member is well aware of. And if he is not aware of, I will refer him, again, to the consultation paper published by the Registrar of Companies in November 2024 which sets out the full Government position and policy on this particular matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Second supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, [I] thank the Honourable Premier for the answer.

Right now, a number of our companies, especially banks, corporate service providers, have difficulty navigating the complexity of the different definitions. And so, what are we going to do or what mechanisms will the Registrar of Companies use to ensure consistent interpretation across the various definitions as it stands today?

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be one definition inside of the Beneficial Ownership Bill, which will be tabled later today.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Premier.

You have a second question?

QUESTION 2: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I do, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Given that the Registrar will be issuing guidance as it relates to the definitions of beneficial ownership that will have to be widely interpreted in industry right now (currently the BMA is issuing guidance), how will the Registrar's powers to issue or update guidance be checked and reviewed by Parliament, or will it be by any other oversight body?

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be a full debate on this particular Bill and all those particular matters will be spelled out at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you. I have a supplemental to that point.

I thank the Honourable Premier for committing to making sure it comes before the House, including the guidance notes. But what appeal or redress mechanisms will be available to beneficial owners and companies that dispute the Registrar’s determinations, relating to what they have to file?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be a full debate on this legislation in this House, and all those matters can be addressed in full at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind Members that we cannot engage in something that may impact on a debate that is going to be had in the House. Just so that you know, that is why you are getting the response you’re getting.

Do you have a third question?

QUESTION 3: BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BILL 2025, TABLING OF

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, my third question is: Why did the Premier table this, since he is unable to answer these questions?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: [Madam Deputy Speaker], I am not entirely certain what's wrong with the Opposition today. They seem to be anticipating something very much.

The Statement is rather self-explanatory. We are tabling the Beneficial Ownership Bill. We are indicating that this particular Bill is still subject to public consultation. That public consultation will be finished. We are expecting that the Bill will go, but there may be changes. That is it.

And we will have the time to debate the Bill. And I am sure that they will be anxious in awaiting the tabling. As for the question which was asked, it is rather just silly, but that is okay. This is the mood of which they are in today, so, unfortunately, we will have to put up with it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Do you have a follow up?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: No supplemental. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I meant *supplemental*. Uh-huh.

No supplemental? Thank you for that.

Okay, so that was all the questions for the beneficial ownership [Statement].

That moves us to the [Statement] on the BLMC [Bermuda Land Management Corporation update 2025]. Member Fahy has questions for the Minister.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Good morning again.

Questions for the Honourable Minister: Minister, you advised, the Minister advised, that the redevelopment of King's Wharf will commence in October and be completed in March 2016 *[sic]* in the Statement.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Michael Fahy: What guarantee . . . excuse me, 2026, thank you. What guarantees if any are in place that the work will be completed on time?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, I certainly do not have the crystal ball that former Finance Minister from the OBA, Mr. Bob Richards, had. But as the Honourable Member, I am sure, will know that when construction projects are estimated, they are given a time frame. And that is the time frame that has been predicted and that is the time frame we hope that we achieve at the end of the day.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Yes. So, no guarantees.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: When I was making reference to that, let us make it a little more clear. Are there any contractual penalties that may come into place if the project is not completed by March 2026?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As in most AIA [American Institute of Architects] contracts, (I'm sure the Honourable member knows that) there are liquidated damages attached to all government contracts.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Do you have a second supplemental?

Hon. Michael Fahy: I do, thank you.

Perhaps the Minister would share what those liquidated damages look like in this instance, if the contract is not completed by March 2026.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will be happy to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have a second question?

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: I do, thank you very much.

The Minister made reference in his Statement to a project at Daniel's Head. Excellent. I am glad to see that something may eventually happen there. What I would like to know is, there is a six-month MOU that has been entered into with [NCLH, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings] from your Statement, or from the Minister's Statement. Were there any other entities that expressed interest, and if so, who? In the Daniel's Head ability. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: To answer the question, there have been several folks who have expressed interest.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Do you have a supplemental?

Hon. Michael Fahy: We're going to play games today. Okay, that is fine.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Madam Deputy Speaker, and who are those parties that expressed an interest in doing a development at Daniel's Head? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There have been no parties, other parties, that expressed interest in development of Daniel's Head.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Second supplemental? Second supplemental or third question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. What I will ask is, second supplemental.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Why was [NCLH] chosen over some others that may have expressed an interest in doing a project at Daniel's Head?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: [NCLH] were not chosen.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Third question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Next question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Victualling Yard. Again, good to hear that there may be something at Victualling Yard. And the Minister did say he was not prepared to share further details of the project that could happen. However, would the Minister share the type of project that it may be without disclosing details of the parties? For example, is it a hotel potential development? Is it something with one of the cruise lines? Perhaps the Minister would be prepared to share that information with this Honourable House.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I'll be happy to.
It is not a hotel, but it is a business that I know that everybody in this House would love to see happen, whether it is selling peanuts or selling paper bags. We are just thankful that someone has come forward with a proposal for those particular buildings. And I am sure that Members opposite will support when that information comes forward, if it comes forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Any follow up, supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. Would the Minister share as to whether or not the party involved in this potential project is a local company or is it a company that may have something to do with one of the cruise ships?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It is a local company.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Fahy: No more questions. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. All right.
Member Cannonier, you had questions.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you and good morning, colleagues.
On page three, the Minister says, "[I]n the east, the Water and Waste Infrastructure Project is in the final stages before going live and receiving St. George's waste and turning off the sewage [outfall]." Just curious, and understanding this project from back some time ago, does that mean St. George's, the Corporation of St. George's within the city limits of St. George's? Or are we talking about St. George's at large?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: St. George's at large.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, wow. Nice.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplemental?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, second question, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Second question.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA LAND MANAGEMENT CORPORATION UPDATE 2025

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Very nice. The next question is, considering the sewage, receiving the sewage, does this include also the outpouring on Tobacco Bay as well? Is that shut off, or has it been shut off? So when we say that this is going to be up and going in the next couple of months?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will refer the Honourable Member to the Premier's Statement.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplemental?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just, Madam Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Or first supplemental, sorry. Sorry.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I do not recall any . . . he's saying "Statement." I don't recall any Statement saying that the Tobacco Bay . . . a Statement read out today that says that the wastewater is cut off at Tobacco Bay.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sewage.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, no, no, no. I apologise to the Member. When I said "Premier's Statement," I had the Premier on my mind.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ah.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But I refer you to my Statement.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, he refers you to *his* Statement.

An Hon. Member: Oh. Licking his lips.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Did you have a supplemental now?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's clear that there is a lot going on over there in the front row. I'll leave it at that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Did you have a third question? No.

Okay. So, that moves us on to ShoreLink.

And I call on Member Robinson. He has a question for the Minister of Transport.

QUESTION 1: SHORELINK: LAUNCH OF PHASE 2

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good morning, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

My first question is: The Statement refers to the logging of real-time issues, and I just wanted to know whether or not the real-time issues will be made available to the public who are using that platform, or is it an internal thing for the civil servants to keep track of what's happening?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Minister.

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

I am just waiting on that from the technical officers about the real-time issues. But the real-time information is really good, a good implementation here, because as we were in the pilot stage and the test stage, I was speaking to a young mother who had her phone and she was tracking, actually, her daughter who was leaving school, primary school, a nine-year-old, and was on the bus heading home. So, they were able to track. And that is real-time information. I know we are asked about the real-time issues, and I am just waiting for the information here.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Okay, thank you, Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, the answer is—

The Deputy Speaker: You got it? Okay.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —that the real-time issues is most definitely going to be made to the public.

Just one second. [Madam] Deputy Speaker, there is further information coming on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps we can let the Member go on to his next, or supplemental, question and then you can provide that.

Hon. Owen Darrell: But the—

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, so you have it?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Sorry, in addition to that.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Owen Darrell: The issues, the specific issues, will be for internal uses, for the technicians and the officers to address.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, let me let me clean that up a little bit. The information, obviously, will be public, but the fixing and the back-end stuff will be internal.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, Minister. That is clear.

Member, do you have a supplemental to that?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I do, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And we welcome the real-time information. I am sure it will make a big difference to many families and those who are utilising public transportation.

My supplemental is: Just for clarity, does that mean that this upgrade will now allow people to see cancellations of various public transportation such as buses or ferries? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Do you have a second question, Member?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: SHORELINK: LAUNCH OF PHASE 2

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: As we are scaling up with, you know, moving to phase three of online payments and the like, can the Minister speak about how much information or public information the ShoreLink platform is holding from the customer?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I do not have that answer at this time. That one is a technical question. But if you give me a few moments, I am sure it will come.

The Deputy Speaker: Or perhaps you can provide it for him later.

Member, do you have a supplemental?

Hon. Owen Darrell: I will provide it at a later time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, you can.

Member.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, a supplemental. The reason that I inquired about the public information being stored is, my supplemental is to speak about, you know, cybersecurity when it comes to the ShoreLink app and how the government is employing means to protect that information. Especially when scaling up to online payments and the like.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, so, what protections you have in place, cybersecurity protections? Is that your question? Yes.

Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [I'm] just waiting for the technical responses again.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I know there is a slight delay. I want to . . . somebody said I should use ShoreLink for this.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: But we are working on this. I want to make sure that I provide the Honourable Member, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to provide accurate information to make sure that—

The Deputy Speaker: So maybe you can answer in general and then give him specifics offline.

Hon. Owen Darrell: All right. In general. The information held is names and addresses. However, the bank information is not being held, Madam Deputy Speaker. All information, and the entire usage of this app, is subject to PIPA. And the answer I think to the previous question is *yes*, Madam Deputy Speaker. Cyber protection is in place.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Do you have a second supplemental?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Okay. Thank you for that answer.

And my second supplementary is: When it comes to the cybersecurity, I saw there were a lot of folks that are collaborating on the production of this app, and I want to commend them for the work. Does the cybersecurity defence, or maintenance of this particular ShoreLink platform, fall within the Ministry or the IDT [Information and Digital Technologies]? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: The privacy section will fall with IDT. However, the content will fall within the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, Minister.
Do you have a third question, Member?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I do, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: SHORELINK: LAUNCH OF PHASE 2

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: My third question is, where does the general maintenance of ShoreLink fall? Is that also with IDT or within the Ministry? To maintain the platform.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. [I am] happy to report that IDT has oversight and they are also ensuring compliance with the use of this app. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Any supplementary questions?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, definitely. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: This is your first one.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: My supplemental is: Does the IDT, with this—it seems like, increased—oversight and the constant evolution of this particular ShoreLink platform, has Government noticed, or have they ever requested for additional resources to maintain these various increased duties? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I am not sure I completely understand the question, but I will answer this way.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you like him to—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, as the Statement did say, that there have been outside, and different vendors that have been in place, which just by, you know, simple math would show that there have been increased resources in some part. But as far as internally, within the Ministry directly, the answer is no. But it comes from IDT and the other vendors that are helping to put this in place.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental, or no?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, my final supplemental, Deputy Speaker.

Can the Minister then speak on whether or not the IDT is currently fully staffed enough and capable of providing that level of protection from cybersecurity, and also for the maintenance of this particular app?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Well, I [answered] the previous question, the way I did. I cannot speak to what happens in IDT as you would know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that falls under remit of a different Minister and a different Ministry. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. That concludes questions for you on ShoreLink.

That takes us to National Security.

Member King has questions for the Minister.

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, [Madam] Deputy Speaker, Members of this Honourable House and the listening public.

First off, I want to commend the Ministry of National Security for making funds available to address violence in this community and adopting a holistic approach. My question centres on which body is going to provide oversight and ensure accountability. I understand that it is the violence reduction team. Who are the

Members on that team who are going to be responsible for oversight and accountability? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The oversight body will be a collaboration between the various ministries that we have put together under the Violence Reduction Strategy. That is going to be National Security, Education and . . . it is about four different ministries. I think Youth, Social Development and Seniors. So, there is an oversight body that meets to discuss implementation of the strategy.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy [Speaker]. Regarding this team, is it a formal team with formal structures and they meet on a regular basis to discuss performance metrics?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second supplemental?

Mr. Robert King: Second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Second question.

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the community agencies and other entities that receive funds, what was the vetting process to determine who would receive funds? In particular, were they required to have an RFP which spoke to specific programmes that were going to be offered with specific budgets for implementation?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: No RFP was necessary but there was an application form that was vetted by our Ministry as they came in.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the programmes that are going to be—

The Deputy Speaker: Is that a supplemental?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the programmes: Are the recipients of the funds required to collect specific data which speaks to the success, or areas of need, in the programmes that they are receiving funding for?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Most definitely, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Member.

Mr. Robert King: Regarding that, to add a supplemental.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental, *[sic]* okay.

QUESTION 3: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Mr. Robert King: What specific data are they being asked to provide regarding the success and/or areas of need for future funding and the success of the programmes? That is my final question, thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, yes, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, before you answer.
That is a final question? Or is that your second supplemental?

Mr. Robert King: No, that is final. After that I am done.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay, fine.
Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As the applications come in, they are being vetted by our team, and they are being looked at and monitored by the team. That comes under the umbrella of trying to do best for the country under our new anti-violence strategy. So, the system is in place. And it is working. And as we go forward, I will bring more and more updates to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The Opposition Leader had questions for you. Member.

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Would the Honourable Minister be able to inform this House what are the internal performance metrics and evaluation tools that are being used to assess whether grant funded programmes are actually reducing violence or the risk factors related to violence in our community?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

There is a three-pronged approach to the anti-violence reduction strategy that I brought to this Honourable House back in December: Prevention, intervention and rehabilitation.

The preventative part of the overall strategy is what we are looking to engage in the sporting and community clubs with. So, to ask the question of, How do we know that violence will be reduced? That is a time-honoured point of our strategy. You know, what we are doing, we are trying to engage in community clubs and sporting clubs, and those organisations that deal directly on the preventative part. And as we get the different metrics and results, I am happy to bring them to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Do you have a supplemental? Supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, supplemental, please, Madam Deputy Speaker. The question was, What were those measurements? Not whether they existed.

So, my question to the Honourable Minister as a supplemental is, moving on, has the Ministry adopted outcome-based reporting or logic models to track the impact of specific grant recipients?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the answer is yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Second supplemental, please. Thank you. That is fantastic to hear.

How are the violence trends in high-risk demographics being mapped to inform these funding decisions?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not have the information before me right now, but I am more than happy to answer the Honourable Opposition Leader and I will send him the answer that he has asked.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Question, I meant.

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, thank you.

Would the Honourable Minister clarify how the Ministry ensures that the allocation of funding prioritises the at-risk populations, including those affected by trauma and homelessness?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Can the Honourable Member repeat that question?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: How does the Ministry ensure that the allocation of funding prioritises the most at-risk populations, including those affected by trauma and homelessness?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What we are targeting with the application process that comes in, are those organisations that deal directly with our community and sporting clubs, our private entities and public entities, and they bring a certain amount of experience with them, and when they apply for the grant, we assess and vet each grant application as it comes in.

The Deputy Speaker: Member.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

Supplemental please.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you. Given that half of the grant funding is going to sports clubs, how is the Honourable Minister ensuring that the underserved and high-risk youth who may not engage in sports are not being left behind?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Minors are going to these sports clubs. But, as I said in my Statement, minors are going elsewhere also. So, we are trying to cast a wide net to try and help as many youngsters as possible that could be on the verge of—or not just them, but the sporting clubs and the community clubs are those that are front facing, directly involved with our youth. So, that is why the majority of money is going there, but I did not say all the money was going there. They are going other places to make sure we cast as wide a net as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Supplementary, please. Thank you. What specific grant programmes, then, are focused on the rehabilitation and trauma and grief of the survivors and broken families resulting from violence?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you for that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Part of our national strategy, we also have a team of trauma trained specialists who go out and deal with issues as they arise. Even issues just arising, we have a team addressing that. We have a team that is attached to the national anti-violence strategy. So, we are trying to be as far reaching as we possibly can. Hopefully I could get the Member's answer, give him the proper answer, that we have a team who deals with the trauma-related issues as the country is experiencing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Third question?

QUESTION 3: NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Third question, yes, please. Thank you.

Given the public interest in violence reduction across our community, why hasn't the government released a public implementation plan or progress dashboard for the strategy, similar to other projects?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We brought the anti-violence strategy to the House in December. And I think in the first session we gave an update on it. And every quarter, I think we will be giving updates as is relevant and necessary.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: No, it is a repeat of the same question. The question was, *why hasn't the Government—*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jarion Richardson: A point of order, some clarification would be helpful here, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Point of order?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: The point of order here is that I need some guidance. My question is, Why hasn't the Government—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

But you are choosing to make your supplemental—

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Sorry, I thought I did read in the Standing Orders that I could apply to the Speaker for clarification on how to conduct a question.

The Deputy Speaker: I think you know how to conduct a question.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Mm-hmm.

The Deputy Speaker: But, you are not satisfied with the answer that he gave. That is what you are saying?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I didn't seek . . . Yes, that would be a good way of saying it because I didn't get an answer.

So, I was trying to say *how do I re-answer?*

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Here, just go ahead and repeat your question and let him . . .

Hon. Jarion Richardson: So, my question was, Why hasn't the Government implemented a dashboard, progress dashboard? And the reply was, *we have given updates in the House*. So, the question is, you know, why have you chosen that option instead of a public dashboard? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, so now I think he understands your question. You are asking him why?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Why.

The Deputy Speaker: That is your supplemental question, why has he chosen the option of reporting that he is doing?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, ma'am.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: I already talked to him.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Not every answer is the answer that one wants, right? I was asked a question, I gave an answer, right? Maybe it is right or wrong in his eyes, the question was answered.

But if I could—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Point of order. He is misleading the House, and he is inferring malicious intent. He cannot read my mind.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jarion Richardson: This is . . . he's assumed that I am dissatisfied that he hasn't given the answer I want. The answer I want is the logic of how he reached the conclusion.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: That is all.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not know how many different ways I can say it. We brought the strategy to the House, and we will be updating the public and this Honourable House as the strategy unfolds.

The Deputy Speaker: So, you are saying that your Ministry chooses to report in the manner that you do?

Yes. That is what you're saying. Yes. Okay, thank you.

Do you have a second supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: No, thank you. I greatly appreciate the guidance and clarification.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Thank you, Opposition Leader.

That brings us to the Bermuda Regiment.

Member Richardson, you have questions. Member Richardson, you have questions on the Bermuda Regiment?

QUESTION 1: ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT—SUMMER UPDATE

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Sorry, I do, for the Honourable Minister who is busy.

I have some questions relating to the Coast Guard, the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard. The Honourable Minister mentioned that the Coast Guard fleet is in fact ageing or composed of ageing vessels. So, my question to him is, what is the Government's plan and timeline for replacing and modernising those ageing vessels? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that was in my budget statement. But if I could just kind of summarise it, we know the fleet is ageing, and it is being looked at to modernise the fleet, and we will do that as soon as we possibly can.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you. Has the Ministry explored co-funding vessel procurement models leveraging our deep security connections to the US and UK?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, we have.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Second supplementary, thank you. Will the Minister go in detail as it relates to those considerations and conclusions reached?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, those negotiations are still ongoing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Second question?

QUESTION 2: ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT—SUMMER UPDATE

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you.

The second question relates to the doubling of the headcount for the Royal Bermuda Regiment. Certainly, a good thing in the protection of our waters. But what are the projected salary and training costs associated with this increase?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not have those numbers right in front of me, but if the Opposition Leader sends me those questions, I will be sure to get him the answers.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Do you have a supplemental?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: I don't. I have a third question, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, third question.

QUESTION 3: ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT— SUMMER UPDATE

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you. Given the . . . it actually goes back to the vessels. What contingencies are in place if mechanical failures render key vessels inoperable during times of high need, such as the hurricane season?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: What are the contingencies if a vessel breaks down? You fix it.

We are working closely with the UK and the US Coast Guards. So, if we are in need of any assistance there, we have partners that we can reach out to.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplemental?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes. What is the information the Minister can make available to the boating community now, should they get into distress? Who are they supposed to call if a vessel is unavailable? If the key vessel is suffering from mechanical failures?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I am not too clear, but Harbour Radio. I mean, if you are in distress, you call Harbor Radio and your relevant assistance comes to your aid.

The Deputy Speaker: Member.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Is this your second?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, a second supplementary. I am only going to do a second supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: So, the Minister is saying that, if the Coast Guard can't help you, call somebody else.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, continue. Is that your question?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister. Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

That concludes . . . [Member] Pearman, you have questions?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Minister for your Statement on the Royal Bermuda Regiment summer update.

And before I start, let me just commend how nice it is to see the Honourable Minister in a red tie today. It suits him.

[Inaudible interjections]

[Gavel]

QUESTION 1: ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT— SUMMER UPDATE

Mr. Scott Pearman: My question is following on from the matters that were just discussed with the Honourable Opposition Leader. Namely, the Honourable Minister's Statement today, and I quote, that "Mr. Speaker" (or, indeed, it would be Madam Deputy Speaker) "we must acknowledge ongoing challenges. The Coast Guard's fleet of 11 vessels, primarily composed of ageing former police boats, restricts its operational efficiency due to limitations." And you have indicated that you are going to double the size. Are you going to expand the fleet as well, in terms of those operational requirements?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: When do you anticipate that the ageing fleet will be replaced? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.
Those negotiations are, and discussions are, ongoing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplemental?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Minister. Is that something you anticipate would come to fruition during this summer boating season?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, hopefully as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Second question?

QUESTION 2: ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT— SUMMER UPDATE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question, yes. Thank you, Minister. Still on the same theme of operational efficiencies.
To what extent will the Coast Guard, which as we note is still undermanned and has limited vessel use, be asked to deal with the new boating discharge laws that have been passed?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: The Coast Guard is currently working closely with the police. And whatever boating discharge laws that exist, they work under. I am not too sure of your question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am happy to clarify.

The Deputy Speaker: Clarify.

Mr. Scott Pearman: We just discussed, I think it was the Honourable Minister Adams—I may be mistaken in my recollection—on the last sitting of the House, that there were going to be some new laws around boating discharge and the policing of that, and fines. It may well be the Honourable Minister was not present for that piece of legislation. But obviously, it is a new burden that is being—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry, apparently, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister Jason Hayward has something to say. He can stand up and say it if he wishes. But I will take a point of clarification.

The Deputy Speaker: Were you finished with your comment?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, Madam [Deputy Speaker], I was asking the question as to what extent the undermanned and underfunded, and under-boated Coast Guard will be required to deal with those new laws?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, so.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: Did that provide clarification for you?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not . . . I need to first say, you know, we try to work together in tandem. But some comments, right, need to be addressed. And if I did not understand that question, it does not suggest that I was not in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Right.

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

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I will take a point of order.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no, no. Let me clarify.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I took offence to that.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no, no. Let me clarify.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I'm not sitting down for him.

The Deputy Speaker: Let him . . . yes, you have to sit down.

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no, no. I am very happy to clarify. No offence was intended. And no offence, you know, should be taken. We were in the House discussing a piece of legislation on the last occasion. I was unable to remember which Minister it was. I took a guess at Minister Adams. No offence is intended, and the Minister should not take any.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am happy to clarify that nothing was intended in that remark.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I am glad you did not intend—

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: —there was no malintent, thank you for that.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister, are you able to answer the question that he clarified to you?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Madam, for the good of the listening public, if the Opposition Member sends me the question I will definitely clarify and give him an answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for that.
Did you have a supplemental?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: No, Jason, go sit down.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I am very grateful for the Honourable Minister's indication that he will accept and answer a question. I will send an email inviting him to clarify the percentage terms in which the Coast Guard will have to deal with the new legislation. I am grateful for that indication.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I hope the email gets through. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thanks.
Right. Are there any other supplementals? No?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
That concludes Question Period.
Now that that has concluded, we move on.

[Crosstalk]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Member—

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I can't hear myself speaking. Thank you.
I recognise the Member from constituency 2. Member.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to ask for condolences to be sent to the family of Ms. Aretta Furbert from Boundary Lane in St. George's. Ms. Furbert comes from a family that I have known for 40 years this year, as it was 40 years ago that I came to St. George's Golf Club. And she (and her late husband now) at that time, her daughters Aretta and Cornelia, [they] used to come and have Sunday breakfast at St. George's Golf Club every week. And [she] has passed away. So, I offer condolences to their family.

On a happier note, I would like to recognise the teams representing, and individuals representing, Bermuda at the Island Games. The ladies national football team secured gold. The Bermuda men's national football, under-23 team is playing for gold or silver this afternoon, in their time. And Jake Brislane and Taylor Carrick got silver. And I am proud to say that one of my young proteges from when she was eight years old, Sienna Mosquera, shot a coarse racket at Stromness Gold Club, shot a 65 and was able to lead the Bermuda team. Although they finished fourth, she was able to get a podium finish of third place in the ladies division. She starts at Lehigh University, on the golf team, which is a very outstanding feat for this young Bermudian lady who, among other persons who are trying to get into golf in US colleges, now find it difficult because the rosters have been slashed to eight. So, it has made it far more competitive. But Bermuda has been well represented there, and I just wanted to make mention of the success of that team there.

The Deputy Speaker: And Member DeCouto asks to be associated with those remarks.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, and please associate Member DeCouto, and the whole House, I believe with that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Is that it? Thank you, Member.

Are there are any other Members who wish to speak on this motion?

I recognise the Opposition Leader. Member.

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy [Speaker].

I rise to congratulate the Bermuda Sailors' Home for hosting their Sea Sunday Service, presided over by Bishop Nick Dill. I wanted to congratulate the officers and members. It was a beautiful service, with the Bermuda Sea Cadet Corp providing a guard of honour. Madam Deputy [Speaker], even though we in Bermuda are becoming further and further away from our maritime heritage and economy; fewer of us work on the water. Nonetheless, we are an island with a maritime history, and we do play a key role in safeguarding the mariners who are out there, upon whom we depend. And so, I just wanted to congratulate the Bermuda Sailors' Home for their work to preserve our history and ensure that the mariners who are sailing our waters, and are sustaining us, are safeguarded in their times of need. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 26. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you very much for recognising me, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. Thank you. Good day, colleagues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with some regret I have to ask if condolences can be sent to one of my former constituents, Mr. Harold Sinclair Woods, commonly known as Tim Woods. Bit of a character, lived on Middle Road, not far from where I have my monthly political clinics. He would come by, almost every first Saturday of the month, he would come by and have a chat with me. He would either bring the wife, his wife, Lindamay, with him. And we would have chats. He was really a funny, funny guy when he came by. So, I certainly feel that he will be missed, certainly by his wife Linda. Who, he and her were very close, and the rest of his family. So, again, I ask for condolences.

On another note, a more happier note, I would like to acknowledge two of our young teenagers who are at school abroad and doing quite well in their favoured sports. The first one is my neighbour, Mr. Oliver Betschart, who is a golfer.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: And I will associate MP Swan. And [Ministers] Weeks and De Silva, and MP Doug [De Couto]. Thank you.

Oliver has been playing gold from a very, very young age. I think he is just about 18 now, going on 19. He has, some of us may know that, played in the Bermuda championship in November that the PGA put on here. And he is very good. He is out, as I said, overseas. And he is playing against guys who are really good golfers, and he is, you know, showing the mettle that he has in his sport. So, I certainly wish him well and hope he improves. He just didn't make it in the junior world championship at Torrey Pines, which is a very tough course that I know of. But I do wish him all the best.

The second young person I would like to acknowledge is young Ralph Scott. He is a basketball player. He is presently at the IMG [Academy].

I will associate MP Paul Wilmot.

Who is presently at the IMG [Academy] sports school down in Florida. He got selected amongst 80 of the top basketball, young basketball players, in the United States to play in the match. So, he is doing quite well, and I certainly want to encourage him and wish him well. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Minister from constituency 16. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to my feet initially to bring condolences to another family. A young man lost his life last night on motorbike. And his name has not officially been released, so I am just going to give my condolences to his friends and family, a 16-year-old.

On a lighter note, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate the grandson of one of our own. The MP from constituency 5, I believe it is. His grandson, Nirobi Smith-Mills, is currently out in the UK, in college, doing some amazing things on the track. He is one of Bermuda's bright stars of the future. He just got a personal best in 800 metres, and he is looking forward to representing our Island in the Junior Pan Am Games. So, hats off to him, he has been coming and coming and coming. As a matter of fact, while I am on my feet, he is a Somerset supporter. And he is a very good bowler. So I was always of the hope that he will play Cup Match also. But he has chosen to focus on track right now.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't fake that.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: He won't be on to St. George's but when he gets back . . . when he gets back, he is going to do some amazing things on the cricket pitch. But right now, hats off to him and his family for the amazing things that he is doing out in the UK. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 11, I believe it is. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the listening audience.

Following on from Minister Weeks; I will not call the name, but the young man [who died] came from my constituency. And if you remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, just last year we lost two young men suddenly, and now we have lost a third. So needless to say, the community is rallying around the families as need be.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on a second sad note, one of the key things in this country is housing. And the Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] has always done a stellar job working with what they have. And this morning, I received a WhatsApp that the Bermuda Housing Corporation is in mourning because one of their own has passed. A lady, very elegant lady, very classy lady, Mrs. Pamela Margo Trott. She was a strong AME member, Bethel Church. Well, with a name like Trott, what else. She had been with the BHC for four years. This morning, I had to go around there and speak to everyone, and, needless to say, the spirits were very down. The colours were up but the spirits were down. And I just want to say, for anyone that has come to BHC, Ms. Trott sits in the, I guess you would say, the western office. She was the first one that people meet when they come to pay their bills and so on. Not pay their rent, I should say. And she always had a pleasant demeanour even when she was going through her trials, she came back and had a smile on her face and lit up the office. So, I just want to give condolences to her family, her Bethel family and her BHC family. And I was told to be sure to say that she was a proud St. George's supporter.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

I recognise the Member from constituency 29. Member, you have the floor.

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

I would like to be associated with the condolences that will be sent to the family of Pamela Trott. She was a valued member of the BHC team. All I have heard was good things about her, I have only been there a couple hours, but everything I have heard about this lady was nothing but stellar. So, my condolences go out to the daughters, Nikia and Shauntae. And I echo every sentiment that the chairman, Mr. Famous, just gave.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 9. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask that congratulations be sent out to Bermuda's Senior Women's National Team who, earlier today, retained their title in winning the gold medal at the Island Games.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: It was mentioned, so you can associate yourself.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Oh, all right. Okay. So, I will associate myself with that, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: That is all you want to say?

Mr. Vance Campbell: No, no. But I want to say that it was a closely fought game that finished 1-1 after the actual time period. And it went to penalty kicks, which Bermuda won, 4-2. So, congratulations to our ladies. Lady Gombey Warriors.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

There being none, I am going to call on the Premier at this time. I think this is a good time to recess for lunch.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker . . . do we want to go through?

The Deputy Speaker: Recess for lunch. Until 2:00.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:00 pm.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Seven minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:23 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

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

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: We resume. Members, having finished before lunch doing obits and congratulations, we now move on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

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

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Premier

BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP ACT 2025

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, the Beneficial Ownership Act 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker: We are looking at the first item on the Orders of the Day. It is the second reading of the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Premier, you have the floor.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read for the second time.

The Deputy Speaker: So moved.

BILL

SECOND READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government to rise this afternoon in this Honourable House to debate the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill proposes amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Act [2023] (which I will refer to as the CIT Act) to clarify certain provisions, resolve interpretive issues that have arisen and enhance the overall alignment of the legislation with international standards and administrative best practices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, by way of background, I would like to note that the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 was enacted in December of 2023. The CIT Act imposes a statutory tax rate of 15 per cent on the profits of Bermuda entities that are part of multinational enterprise groups with total global revenues exceeding EUR 750 million in at least two of the preceding four fiscal years. Since that time the Corporate Income Tax Agency has been established and is now operational.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another milestone in this journey was reached yesterday with the launch of the Corporate Income Tax Agency, of CITA, online. This secure and user-friendly digital platform developed to enable corporate taxpayers to submit their CIT payments and is further evidence of the jurisdiction's ability to quickly and effectively deliver complex change. I would like to thank the CEO of the Corporate

Income Tax Agency, Mr. Mervin Skeet, who is joining us here in the Chamber today; Managing Director Louisa Lewis-Ward; and all the team at the Agency for this particular achievement. And just for clarity, it went live yesterday. I believe a press release was issued either yesterday or is going out today, but you can go on the cita.bm website and of course go to CITA online and this will allow the entities who are going to be paying taxes to go ahead [and] register to get their information in advance of the first corporate income tax payments which are expected on 2 September 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, following the decision to implement the corporate income tax the Bermuda Government acted swifty to advance the necessary legislation. Given the complexity and technical nature of international tax matters, it was anticipated that further refinements and supplementary legislation would be needed to establish robust enforcement and compliance frameworks consistent with international best practices.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Corporate Income Tax Agency held a public consultation of proposed amendments to the Act from May to June 2025 which included an illustrative Bill. The feedback received during the consultation process has been thoroughly reviewed and thoughtfully considered where appropriate revisions have been incorporated into the legislation to address the concerns and suggestions raised by stakeholders. This approach ensures the legislation is most practical in its application and reflective of the input from those it will affect.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the proposed amendments relate to the following matters and were put forward for consideration:

- unit linked insurance;
- short-term portfolio shareholdings;
- fiscal transparency election;
- elective reduction in entry year taxable loss effect;
- location rules including treatment of part year BCEs (that is, Bermuda Constituent Entities);
- *de minimis* exemption translation of non-US dollar denominated tax balances;
- clarification as to treatment of entity for section 9 purposes if less than 80 per cent is owned for part of the year, and more than 80 per cent is owned for another part of the year, delegation of fund and other minor corrections.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in addition to the substantive amendments previously outlined, a number of technical changes are also proposed. These include consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act to define the term "officer" as well as amendments to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969. Specifically, it is proposed that new section 10G be inserted to the Public Treasury Act to formally establish the Minister of Finance as responsible for the administration and management of the Tax Refund Reserve Fund which was created under section 50A of the Corporate Income Tax Act [2023]. The proposed amendment would require the Minister to ensure that tax receipts are paid into the fund rather than the Consolidated Fund and that all disbursements, including transfers to the Consolidated Fund are made in accordance with relevant regulations. The provision would also allow the Minister to delegate these responsibilities to the Corporate Income Tax Agency in coordination with the Accountant General.

These administrative provisions are essential to ensuring the effective and transparent operation of the Tax Refund Reserve Fund. By clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the management of tax receipts and disbursements, the amendments support robust governance and accountability. This forms a critical part of the broader infrastructure required to implement and maintain a well-functioning corporate income tax system.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would also like to inform this Honourable House that work is well underway to finalise the regulations for the Tax Refund Reserve Fund. While the necessary provisions are being developed, the relevant legislation will be tabled in the House of Assembly at a later date. This fund represents an important component of the corporate income tax system ensuring appropriate management and allocation of tax revenues in accordance with international standards.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I wish to emphasise that the Government remains confident that the corporate income tax framework reinforces Bermuda's steadfast commitment to global compliance and transparency while preserving the Island's strong and respected international standards. The progress made to date has been greatly supported by the invaluable contributions of the International Tax Working Group whose continued expertise and dedication remain central to this important initiative.

I would like to sincerely thank everyone, the Ministry of Finance, the Corporate Income Tax Agency along with our dedicated advisors, for the time, effort and expertise they have contributed to this work. I also extend my appreciation to the drafting team in the Attorney General's Chambers for their valuable support for this process.

And with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will listen to comments of Members prior calling for us to go into Committee of the whole [House.]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier and Finance Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And thank you to the Honourable Premier for that presentation. I am quite pleased to see it.

I know often there was a lot of anticipation from the Government benches as to whether or not we will support a Bill, so just to help them with their digestion post lunch, we do support this Bill.

It is clearly a very technical Bill. It was quite a slog, but we made it through. And it is natural that there are things that have been learned or that needed to be adjusted or clarified. I know, for example, that there will be many international developments. And frankly, we would not be surprised on the Opposition's side if we were to see further amendments to this Bill later this year based on what we hear internationally.

We also commend the Government on their fulsome and detailed and very collaborative consultation process which increases our confidence in this Bill. We know that many key stakeholders were consulted in detail. And I think the key factor there is that that consultation was not just a *telling,* but it was also a *listening* and a receiving and acting on what was received. And frankly, Madam Acting Chair, we would look forward to see that kind of consultation happening in many—sorry, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, we would look forward to seeing that kind of truly two-way consultation happening in many of the other areas where the government professes to be consulting.

As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, we still have very many concerns around the uncertainty of the corporate income tax payments and so we will be watching closely and look forward to the Government informing the public as to how those first payments have gone. I know in the past the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance has had some uncertainty about how many people will be paying into this fund. So, we certainly look forward to getting some hard information on that. We are hopeful that this CIT works out for Bermuda. It could be very important. But we are cautious about overreliance on it. We certainly know that it is concentrating our risk and reliance upon international business. That is why it is important that this Bill is being so carefully examined and consulted on. For which, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have just commended the Government on and thanked them for that.

We certainly, you know, are glad to see that the CITA is up and running. We are glad to hear about their online portal for dealing and making submissions and things like that. Clearly, those kinds of blocking and tackling, bread and butter things, are very important to the CIT taxpayers who, frankly, we will become more and more reliant on. I mean, where we have reservations, it is not about this Bill. It is about the overall picture of will those CIT taxpayers continue to find Bermuda an attractive jurisdiction. And of course, that is not in the remit of the details of this Bill or even the CITA. But I think it does remain an important topic, and we would like to see the kind of diligence and consultation that was paid towards this Bill, taken in all the other areas that I know those important CIT taxpayers have many, many concerns of.

I did have one specific question that perhaps the Honourable Premier would address. I noted his comments and the bits in the Bill about the Tax Reserve Fund. I do know in the past we talked about that. That there would be an allocation made into . . . from the CIT payments some could go into that Reserve Fund, and some might go directly into the Consolidated Fund. And I know in the past, Madam Deputy Speaker, we in the Opposition have had questions about how those funds will be allocated. How will that be decided? And perhaps this might be for Committee. Perhaps. But it does look to my layman's reading that perhaps now all the funds go straight into the Reserve Fund in the first instance. So, if I am incorrect on that, I look forward to clarification and would like to understand more about how CITA or the Ministry will choose to allocate the funds between that Reserve Fund and the Consolidated Fund.

But overall, we are very pleased with this Bill and thank you to the Government for doing such a good job with it. And obviously everybody at CITA—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I couldn't hear you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I know that the Government is always concerned with our views on these topics and so we are pleased to provide them in this venue, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And also, thank you to the various people who have already been mentioned by the Premier, the CEO, MD [Managing Director] and all the hard workers at CITA.

So, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025?

There are none.

Minister and Premier.

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

I think that the Honourable Member did say that his question would be better for Committee, or do you want an answer to the question now? Because I am not entirely certain. I think he is making an interpretation in regard to the matter related to the funds. And it would be correct that until there are any amendments brought, the funds will be paid into what the legislation does state. And as I stated in my introductory comments, the first payments, which are 50 per cent of the expected taxable income for . . . sorry, the expected

payment for the year will be due to be paid on or before 2 September.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, and hearing nothing further, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill be committed.

I call on the Member from constituency 1 to take the [Chair.]

Sergeant.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: We are going into Committee. Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: She looks so lovely.

House in Committee at 2:17 pm

[Mrs. Renee Ming, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members, and listening audience. We are now on the second reading for the . . . I'm sorry. Wrong paper.

We are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025.

I call on the Minister in charge to proceed.

Minister of Finance, you have the floor.

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

Madam Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 10.

The Chairman: Does any Member wish to speak on clauses 1 through 10?

Oh, I'm sorry. I am really messing up today. I am so sorry.

Hon. E. David Burt: It's the blue and blue.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is clouding your judgment.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It is the anticipation of losing the Cup.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 10 be approved.

Does any Member—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What happens after they lose the Cup?

Hon. E. David Burt: Be nice.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 10 be considered.

Is there any objection to that motion?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Chairman: No objection.

Agreed to.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right. Thank you.

Madam Chairman, clause 1 contains the Bill's citation.

Clause 2 both updates and introduces certain new definitions to the principal Act. Section 2(1) of the principal Act will be amended to clarify that key elections such as the "annual election," [and] "five-year election" may be made [by] or [on] behalf of Bermuda Constituent Entity and provides the definition of "branch exemption election" to allow the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity to allocate income or loss to specific permanent establishments. Additional changes enabling an annual election to treat all portfolio shareholdings as short-term, redefining [unclaimed] accrual to allow exclusion from deferred tax adjustments under certain conditions and introduce a new definition for "matched insurance contract" to account for economic offsets in economic obligations.

Clause 3 amends section 5 of the principal Act to clarify that taxable net income is to be determined on a fiscal year basis with specific wording changes for consistency and clarity. A new subsection is added to allow for a Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity for fiscal years following the defined period to elect to reduce taxable losses with a corresponding adjustment to calculations under section 6.

Clause 4 amends [section 7 of the principal Act] and provides additional clarity with respect to provisions of the principal Act relevant to the *de minimis* exemption from taxation. And this amendment to revise the election process in subsection (1) to clarify that it must be made annually and must apply uniformly to all Bermuda Constituent Entity Groups within the same In Scope MNE Group for a given fiscal year. Additionally, new provisions redefine how average revenue and net taxable income or loss are calculated accounting for short fiscal years, entity changes within a group and excluding certain prior years based on specific conditions to ensure a consistent and fair assessment.

Clause 5 amends section 8(3) of the principal Act to specify that the provision applies to a filing Bermuda Constituent Entity rather than any Bermuda Constituent Entity. Additionally, a minor grammatical correction is made by removing an unnecessary comma in paragraph (a).

Clause 6 repeals section 9(3) of the principal Act to replace it with provisions allowing Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity to elect to disregard the 80 per cent ownership threshold under certain conditions. Specifically, it may treat an entity as a Bermuda Constituent Entity even if it would not normally qualify provided an election is made.

Clause 7 makes certain amendments to section 11 of the principal Act to clarify that certain elections must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity not by the MNE Group generally and ensures consistency across all Bermuda Constituent Entity Groups within the same In Scope MNE Group for the fiscal year.

Clause 8 amends the principal Act by introducing a location rule for Bermuda Tax Resident Entities. This is done by adding a provision stating that a Bermuda Tax Resident Entity shall be regarded as located in Bermuda. This formalises the geographic treatment of such entities within the Act.

Clause 9 amends the provision of the principal Act dealing with fiscal transparency and any related elections by updating language to clarify that elections for tax treatment must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity depending on whether the entity is a Bermuda Tax Resident. It also establishes rules for the treatment of segregated account companies aligning them to elect to treat accounts as separate or fiscally transparent entities.

Clause 10 inserts a new section 15A into the principal Act to make provision for the calculation of taxable income where an entity has only been resident in Bermuda for part of its fiscal year.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

It has been moved that clauses—

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: I'm so sorry. This needs to get updated.

It has been moved that clauses 1 through 10 are taken under consideration. Is there any objection to that?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Does any other Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 10?

No Members?

Okay. I call on the Premier and Minister of Finance.

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

Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 10 be approved and stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 10 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 10 passed.]

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

Madam Chairman, I would like to now move clauses 11 through 21.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 11 through 21 be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that?

No objection.

Premier, proceed.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Madam Chairman, clause 11 makes amendments to section 21 of the principal Act clarifying that elections related to financial accounting income adjustments be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity. It allows for an annual election to adjust income based on ownership interest limited to the first two fiscal years from 1 January 2025.

Clause 12 makes a typographical amendment to section 22 of the principal Act by changing the wording from "made by" to "made for" to align with correct legal interpretation of filing responsibilities. This is a technical clarification for consistency.

Clause 13 amends the principal Act by clarifying the allocation of income rules in section 23 of the principal Act.

Clause 14 amends section 26 of the principal Act to clarify the rules regarding elections under that section stating that unless an election under section 33(8) was made, the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity may not make certain elections under sections 29 and 34 for pre-October 2023 periods. This limits retroactive tax planning.

Clause 15 makes certain amendments to section 29 of the principal Act to clarify that the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity, not just any Bermuda Constituent Entity, must make elections to adjust taxable income or loss. This aligns election responsibility with the central filer.

Clause 16 makes certain amendments to section 30 of the principal Act by adding the word "Filing" to emphasise that only a Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity may act under this provision. This reinforces clarity in responsibility.

Clause 17 amends section 31 of the principal Act by introducing provisions dealing with tax treatment

of matched insurance contracts by introducing a new rule for insurance companies excluding certain reserve movements from taxable income calculations. This avoids double accounting of excluded dividends or equity gains or losses.

Clause 18 makes certain amendments to section 33 of the principal Act specifying that elections under subsection (8) must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity. This amendment centralises the authority for such decisions.

Clause 19 makes certain amendments to section [34] of the principal Act by updating the multiple sections to make clear that elections under this section must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity while standardising the language throughout.

Clause 20 makes certain amendments to section 35 of the principal Act clarifying that elections regarding assets and liability treatment must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity and must specify which assets and liability the election applies to. This improves transparency and the consistency in tax reporting.

Clause 21 makes certain amendments to section 37 of the principal Act to primarily facilitate the better filing of returns by inserting "Filing" to specify which entity is responsible under subsection (4). And this and other consistency edits [are] for precision in interpretation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Does any Member wish to speak to clauses 11 through 21?

No Members?

Premier.

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

Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 11 through 21 be approved and stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 11 through 21 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 11 through 21 passed.]

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

Madam Chairman, I would like to move clauses 22 through 30.

The Chairman: Members, it has been under for consideration that clauses 22 through 30 be moved.

Does any Member object to that?

No objection.

Premier, proceed.

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

Madam Chairman, clause 22 makes certain clarifications to elections that may be made under section 40 of the principal Act, replacing language to specify that the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity may elect to include fair value changes of ownership interest in certain entities as taxable income. This provides clarity and authority for such elections.

Clause 23 makes certain clarifications to elections that may be made under section 41 of the principal Act clarifying that elections relating to investment or insurance investment entities must be made by the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity and provides precise eligibility criteria. It also updates the paragraph language for clearer application of elections.

Clause 24 makes certain amendments to section 45 of the principal Act primarily to better facilitate the filing of tax returns by updating language to specify that the Filing Bermuda Constituent Entity must act under this section and removes a reference to ["of an] In Scope MNE Group." This narrows and clarifies its applicability.

Clause 25 makes certain amendments to section 46 of the principal Act adding "Filing" before Bermuda Constituent Entity to reinforce who has authority under subsection (2). It is a technical amendment for consistency.

Clause 26 amends the principal Act to clarify that the Minister may also specify methodologies for the calculation of foreign exchange amounts under section 47 of the principal Act in clarifying that official exchange rates and methodologies may be published by notice in *The Official Gazette.* This gives flexibility and transparency to rate setting.

Clause 27 makes a typographical amendment to section 49 of the principal Act by substituting language in subsection (2) to clarify how section 33(8) elections interact with subjection (1) thus ensuring consistent application of election rules.

Clause 28 amends the principal Act to clarify that responsibilities for the administration of the Tax Refund Reserve Fund may be delegated to either or both the Agency and the Accountant General.

Clause 29 makes consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024 by adding a definition of "officer" to include any director or secretary of the Agency. This provides legal clarity on who qualifies as an officer.

Clause 30 makes consequential amendments to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 to reflect the changes made to [section] 50A of the principal Act by section 28 of the Bill, which of course inserts a new section to allow the Minister to administer the Tax Refund Reserve Fund and delegate authority to the Agency or to the Accountant General. It ensures proper handling of tax receipts and fund management in accordance with the corporate income tax legislation.

The Chairman: Does any Member wish to speak to clauses 22 through 30?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25, MP Douglas DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairman. And thank you to the Honourable Premier for the presentation.

With respect to clause 30 which . . . which . . . (vocabulary today) which [adds new section] 10G [to] the Public Treasury [(Administration and Payments)] Act [1969]. So, the new [section] 10G(1)(a), my reading of that is that every dollar that gets paid as CIT must pass first into the Tax Refund Reserve Fund. So, my question to the Premier is, Is that a correct reading?

And underneath subsections (a) and (b), there is a line that states "in each case in accordance with regulations [made under section] 50A of the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023." We know that that refers to regulations as to how funds might be allocated between the Tax [Refund] Reserve Fund and the Consolidated Fund. So, my question is partly related to the first question, which is it sounds like all funds must first pass into the Tax [Refund] Reserve Fund before going anywhere else.

And then I guess the second question would be, Have any such regulations been made and published? Because I am not aware of any. We know we have heard about the 50 per cent, for example, in the Budget Debate, Madam Chairman, but I am not aware of any written regulations that describe how these funds will be allocated. And therefore, you can imagine, Madam Chairman, one could go and audit the accounts and say, *Yes, the payments that came into the Tax [Refund] Reserve Fund all appear there for us.*

So you add up and say, *Yes, all the taxpayer money added up and that got into the account and then this amount got paid out of that account to the Consolidated Fund, and yes, it was in accordance with the regulations.*

So, I believe those are my two questions. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak to clauses 22 through 30?

No?

Premier, I believe you have that one question.

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

In regard to I think the second part of the question, his interpretation is correct as per the law insofar as reading the law, the amendment of which we are making now, because section 50, as it currently reads, says that paid in accordance with the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments] Act [1969], . . . or the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act [1969] will state very clearly that all funds must be paid into the Consolidated Fund. So, this is making sure it is clear that all matters are going to the Tax Refund Reserve [Fund] and that is where all payments be made.

Insofar as regulations, the Honourable Member is correct. The reason he has not seen them is because they have not yet been made. But when they are made, they will be published in the regular fashion and brought to this House as required by the Statutory Instruments Act.

The Chairman: Does any other Member . . . I recognise the Member for constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you to the Premier for the answer. I do appreciate the information.

Given that this clause is quite about the details of how the money is coming in, where it is going to go and by which rules, and we have heard from the Premier that the first monies will be coming in on or before the 2nd of September, which for those listening is the first working day after the end of the eighth month, being August, which is why the September date. Perhaps we could get some information as to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, we would hope that such regulations would be created prior to the receipt of those first tax payments. Is the Honourable Premier able to comment on when we should expect to see these regulations? Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Does any Member wish to speak to clauses 22 through 30?

No?

Premier, you have that question.

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

Just to make sure that I am clear, it is the Act that specifies the percentage of the amounts that are to be paid by the particular month, not necessarily the regulations. The regulations will specify the handling of those funds and any changes. Insofar as when the regulations will be published, the regulations will come to this Honourable House as they are being done under the negative resolution procedure specified under the Statutory Instruments Act. They will come into this House after they are made. In regard to the timing, I will share with the Honourable Member I have seen a number of particular drafts and I would expect that those particular matters will be finalised relatively shortly.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I certainly appreciate the answer from the Premier and I want to . . . I am not expecting another

follow-up because he did answer. But my question on percentages was not, Which percentage of the tax payment was a full 100 per cent; expected tax amount was paid when? It was, when a payment is made, which percentage of those funds would be left in the Tax [Refund] Reserve Fund and which percentage would then be moved into the Consolidated Fund?

We know that our budget is quite dependent on the cash flow from the corporate income tax and therefore that percentage that would be moved from the Tax [Refund] Reserve Fund into the Consolidated Fund is quite an important number for us to know as well as the procedures by which that percentage will be determined. And so, we will wait patiently. And I am sure that the Government will produce such regulations prior to any funds being received from the corporate income taxpayers.

Those are my final comments. And thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to the Premier.

The Chairman: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, though I am not going to speak to the precise nature of timing, I think that it is important that the Honourable Shadow Minister of Finance recognises that in the initial question of which he asked, he referred 50 and 90 to regulations of which were issued, and that is the reason why I made it clear that those are matters that are not specified in regulations. Those are matters which are specified inside of the principal Act.

However, as has been stated, we will have the Reserve Fund Regulations which will be brought before this Honourable House and will be published in the way underneath the Statutory Instruments Act 1977. If he has any questions at that point in time, I will be happy to answer them.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Does anyone else have any questions?

No.

Premier.

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

Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 22 through 30 be approved and stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 22 through 30 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

None; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 22 through 30 passed.]

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

I move the preamble be approved.

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

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

Premier.

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

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

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

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection; agreed to.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 2:39 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

The Deputy Speaker: It is my understanding that the Bill has been reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There being none, we move to the second Order of the Day which is the consideration of the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of [Contributions and] Benefits) Order 2025. And I think this is going to be done by our Junior Minister of Finance, Member Furbert.

Junior Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, today I stand before this Honourable House . . . first of all, I have to move the . . .

[Laughter]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Talk about her going to sleep.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I move that consideration be given to the draft Order entitled the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2025 proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 37 of the Contributory Pensions Act 1970.

The Deputy Speaker: So moved.

Continue, Junior Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS) ORDER 2025

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: As I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, today I stand before this Honourable House with a message of reassurance, respect and responsibility.

It is my duty today on behalf of the Minister of Finance, the Honourable David Burt, JP, MP, and my privilege to present the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of [Contributions and] Benefits) Order 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda's seniors are the architects of our modern nation. They worked tirelessly, raised families, supported communities, and laid the foundation for our progress. Now in their later years, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you are aware, it is our moral obligation to ensure that they are cared for with dignity and gratitude.

This Government's commitment to our seniors is unwavering. Today's legislation is more than an amendment; it is an affirmation that their needs are not forgotten and that their well-being remains our priority. Bermuda provides retired individuals with a combination of social insurance benefits from the Contributory Pension Fund [CPF] and a mandatory Occupational Pension from their employer.

Ideally, the Social Insurance Benefit should provide a first tier or basic pension which will be supplemented by the second tier, or Occupational Pension. Through no fault of their own, however, several retired persons are currently not receiving the Occupational Pension, and therefore rely on the Social Insurance Benefit as their sole source of income. This situation could be better, and the Government continues to work to ensure that seniors who rely heavily on their social insurance benefits have a dependable resource.

Notwithstanding the above, the CPF benefits provide an important base retirement income. Currently, the maximum pension paid under the CPF is around 29 per cent of the median annual gross earnings for Bermudians as indicated in The Bermuda Job Market Employment Briefs produced by the Department of Statistics in September 2024. This compares closely to the UK with a full basic state pension as a percentage of average earnings around 30 per cent; The Bahamas, 28 per cent; Jamaica, 20 per cent; Barbados, 30 per cent; Trinidad and Tobago, 29 per cent; and in the Cayman Islands, the structure of retirement benefits differs due to the absence of a government-provided contributory pension.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The Cayman [Islands] operates a mandatory private pension scheme which we also have as an addition.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, the proposal is straightforward but meaningful. All pensions and benefits provided under the Contributory Pensions Act 1970 will be increased by 2.3 per cent, effective 16 August 2025. The adjustment will be reflected in the payment issued on 15 September [2025]. This adjustment directly matches the 2.3 per cent rise in Bermuda's cost of living, ensuring that our seniors are not disadvantaged by inflation.

There are five types of benefits payable under the Contributory Pensions Act 1970. All the pensions and allowances have been increased by 2.3 per cent. These pensions or allowances are:

- contributory old age pension;
- contributory widow's and widower's allowance;
- contributory disability benefit;
- non-contributory old age pension; and
- non-contributory disability benefit.

In practical terms, the basic contributory pension will rise from $1,179 per month (for those of you who are 65 and over in this room) to $1,206 per month.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I'm 35, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The maximum contributory pension will increase to approximately $1,752 per month. And this is something for everyone to note. Some 15,086 of our fellow Bermudians depend on these benefits. From 15 September 2025, they will see their pension rise offering not just financial support but peace of mind.

In July 2018, the PLP Government formally pledged to raise pensions every year at the inflation rate. A commitment to which they have abided except for 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, [prompting] the Government to exercise fiscal [caution] amid economic uncertainty. The Government compensated with a broader increase in 2021. The combined inflation for 2020 and 2021 was about 1.50 per cent. However, in 2021, the Government increased the pension by 2.75 per cent. I am proud to remind this Honourable House that this marks the seventh pension increase by this Progressive Labour Party Government since 2017.

Some Hon. Members: The seventh. The seventh.

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: *I am proud to remind this Honourable House—*

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: —*that this marks the seventh pension increase by this Progressive Labour Party Government since 2017.*

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: In each instance we have acted decisively to protect the purchasing power and dignity of our seniors. A 1.75 per cent increase in 2017; 1.40 per cent in 2018; 1.20 per cent increase was done in 2020 for 2020 and 2019. [Also,] a 2.75 per cent increase was done in 2022 for 2022 and 2021. It was a combination. [There was a] 4.10 per cent increase in 2023; 2.40 per cent [increase] in 2024 and here we are 2.30 per cent [increase] in 2025.

This consistent record stands in contrast, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the former Government—

Some Hon. Members: Aah!

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: —who allowed seniors to wait for how long?

An Hon. Member: Too long!

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Five years without relief!

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Five years.

Compassion does not secure pensions, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will say that again. *Compassion alone does not secure pensions.* Financial responsibility is essential.

The Contributory Pension Fund remains strong with net assets exceeding $2.25 billion, as of 31 March 2025, ten times the annual value of benefit payments. Even without further contributions the fund could sustain its payment for almost 10 years.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government believes it must strengthen the pension fund. Contributions will be increased by 4.81 per cent in August 2025. This is 2.51 per cent more than the benefit increased proposal for the year.

Weekly contributions for those under 65 will increase from [$]71.84 to [$]75.30. As you know, that is the split between employer and employee. For those over 65, contributions will rise from $35.92 to $37.65, paid entirely by the employer, none by the employee. This amount of increase ensures that we protect future generations of pensioners while honouring current beneficiaries. In this regard, the Government's sound investment strategy for pension fund assets is achieving good results. As of 31 March (as I said) the net stood . . . contributory pension fund investment stood at $2.099 billion. The nominal rate of return for the 10 years preceding 31 March 2025 has been 5.8 per cent. Pretty good return.

An Hon. Member: Not bad.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, as evidenced by the 2023 Actuarial Report tabled in this Honourable House on 4 March 2025, the viability of the fund in the short- to medium-term is good with the fund being positive for the next, as I said, 19 years until 2042. However, in addressing the long-term challenges associated with pensions generally, the Ministry will continue to monitor the performance of the fund. It also will be noted that the funding policy for the CPF is based on sustainable funding rather than on a full actuarial funding. That is, contributions plus investment income should cover benefits and administration expenses on an annual basis while the fund builds sufficient reserves to cover several years of benefits and expenses to withstand future adverse circumstances.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we must remain vigilant. Bermuda, like many countries, faces demographic challenges. I note the important work done by the Pension Fund Committee. This committee includes officials from the Ministry of Finance, the Public Funds Investment Committee (PFIC), assisted by consultants McKinsey & Company and TELUS Health which have been assessing the current state of the PSSF [Public Service Superannuation Fund] and the CPF [Contributory Pension Fund] while evaluating options to address the government's pension funds.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government will never shrink *[sic]* its duty to Bermuda's seniors. I will repeat that again. This Government will never shrink *[sic] its duty*—

An Hon. Member: Shirk.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Shirk! Sorry. That's Hamilton Parish talk.

[This Government] will never shirk its duty to Bermuda's seniors. Each pension increase, each policy change is a demonstration of our care and our commitment to our senior citizens today. That includes you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: This Government sees you, this Government values you, and this Government will always stand with you. Today's legislation is not merely about finances; it is about fairness. It is about dignity. It is about ensuring that those who built Bermuda can retire in security and in peace.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2025?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.

Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And thank you to the Junior Minister for his presentation.

We certainly support the increases in the benefits. Of course, it is important for our seniors. We note the increase in contributions, and we are very glad to see that. The actuarial report was mentioned. We know that this Contributory Pension Fund, also known as Social Insurance, is not going to have enough money after the mid-2040s, as per the last actuarial [report]. And in fact, its position had worsened from the prior actuarial report. So, this contribution increase should no doubt go a little bit of the way to improving the situation.

We know that the Government has undertaken that it will complete a full reform of this fund. So, while it is important that we support our seniors, and I am not going to call out anyone in particular in here, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is also important to support those who are in their traditionally prime working years, or our younger Bermudians. And frankly, until and unless changes are made in this Contributory Pension Fund it will not be operating correctly to support them when they come to the age by which they might need it. And that is our major concern here.

With respect to the increases and the payouts, of course, glad to see them. I would suspect, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you were to poll the recipients of these funds they would say, *Thank you. It's still not keeping up. It's still not keeping up.* And that's certainly the feedback that we receive of the situation that people are in out there in Bermuda today.

We look forward to learning about the reforms that the Government will do for the Contributory Pension Fund, that is for Social Insurance. We know that it will need to have many moving pieces. Some more pay-ins, such as we have heard about and that are contemplated in this . . . that we are discussing today. It will probably need to have things like extending the retirement age or something.

It is important to note that this fund, unlike the Public Service Superannuation Fund, is not directly backed by the Government by law. Versus the Public [Service] Superannuation Fund. Or to put it another way, the Civil Servants Pension has a direct recourse to the Government should it run out of money. This one does not. We presume that such a Government would step in if they were, but that is why the reforms are all the more important.

We know that whenever we reform pension funds, wherever that may be, it is always a tough, tough topic, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it always involves adjusting levers of things like payouts and pay-ins and ages that directionally are not as attractive to people other than the people who are a ways out from actually receiving the benefits and would like to actually receive them.

While we have applauded the Government on actually undertaking action on the PSSF, the public service fund, we do know that the feedback they were getting is that, the consultation on that, perhaps has not been what people would have hoped, Madam Deputy Speaker. There has been quite a lot of consternation around these things that impact people on a very personal basis. And so, we urge the Government, when they come to the actual reform of this Contributory Pension Fund, which we hope is much sooner rather than later, that they really, really, really do perform the kind of true two-way consultation that we saw in the previous Bill that we talked about today. It has been really important.

So, that said, we do support this, but we do note with great concern the fragile nature of this fund and the current lack of action by the Government to reform it. So, we urge them to accelerate and implement their plans with true consultation on reform.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this Order?

I recognise the Member from constituency 2. You wish to yield to the Member from—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

I recognise the Member from constituency 4.

Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would just like to rise to support the amendment to this Contributory Pension Order of 2025. Mrs. Speaker—Mrs—this is messing me up today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Governments have a duty to continue to support their elders and a duty to make sure that we are looking after our elders, which is a place in which each and every Member in this House will be in one day when we are having to . . . and some may already be there actually, when it comes to pensions.

One . . . a common statement that I get in the community is our seniors who constantly say, *Thank you. Thank you for taking care of us seniors.* (They say.) And they are no doubt, Madam Deputy Speaker, speaking to the increases to their Contributory Pension [Fund]. While we speak about definitely taking care of our pensioners, yes, we should also be thinking about how we take care of our young people. But there is a

difference between a fixed income, which is your pension, and a variable income, which our younger people have the opportunity to get more time to have variability in their income. But we know with the cost of living that things go up and it is particularly more challenging and difficult for those persons who are on this fixed income.

There are statistics out there, Madam Deputy Speaker, that speak to approximately 80 per cent of our seniors owning their homes. And we also know, particularly having the responsibility for financial assistance, that many of our seniors own homes which people have a choice to use them of course for shelter or an investment or an asset. But many of our seniors are cash poor. And so, there is an appreciation that, you know, for the Government in the ability to recognise why there should be a rationale for the increase in pension. I believe my colleague already shared that there have been seven increases—

An Hon. Member: I did.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Seven increases—did I hear you say that?

Some Hon. Members: Seven.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Seven increases in the past eight years since we have been Government, 2017. And if the listening public is not aware, the maximum pension that a pensioner can get is approximately . . . is it $1,600 per month? Approximately, $1,650?

Hon. E. David Burt: No, no, no, $1,752.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes! Because it has gone up. It will be going up.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

An Hon. Member: I can attest to that.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: You can attest to that!

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But still, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you look at that amount, if that is the only income that you are receiving, knock off FutureCare of about $500, you got to pay for groceries, you got to pay additional prescriptions, you got to pay for your BELCO, and if you just want to buy something for your grandchild, all of those things add up and they make a difference. And for us to recognise the need for the increase in the basic pension does make a huge difference to our pension.

And I believe I also heard my colleague speak to . . . because while the topic that we really pay a lot of focus on is the contributory old age pension, the other categories that also do exist are the contributory pension for widows as well as contributory pension for disability, the non-contributory pension for . . . old age pension as well as the non-contributory pension for persons with disability benefit and all of those, Madam Deputy Speaker, will be helpful for all of those people who fall into those categories.

You can imagine someone who has lost their spouse. When they were used to having two pensions are now just reduced to one. Or someone who has a disability who has a hard enough job as it is being consumed or retained in the employment sector, it is very difficult as we would have heard particularly when I spoke about the human rights discrimination piece, that it is difficult for persons with disabilities. And that pension is not that much either, probably will take up all of their HIP [Hospital Insurance Plan] insurance, or FutureCare insurance.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to continue to applaud this Government for recognising the contributions to our seniors for keeping their word and their promise as it relates to increasing the pensions for our seniors. And to also recognise that these changes also will affect us as we age as well. And with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to definitely show my support for this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this contributory pension amendment?

I recognise the Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

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

I first would like to declare my interest. I am a senior. I am a pensioner, and I am appreciative of the seven increases by this Progressive Labour Party Government in eight years. And I think I can put it into context what it means. Had there not been those increases, had it been the ethos continued on from the previous administration, as was mentioned, the pension that is received today by seniors would be substantively less . . . substantively less.

And while people say . . . to scoff at what Government . . . triumphs when it does, it is a difference in what we believe in doing and what they practiced during their administration. And the reason why it is in stark contrast is because anyone who is 65 and over today would not have [been] born into an occupational pension that was . . . a private occupational pension that was introduced by this very Government.

So therefore, there are many persons who, unless they were working for a major institution in Bermuda, and let's see, what are the major institutions? Well, the utility company, being a monopoly, would be a major institution. A banking institution would be a

major institution in this country and there are other legacy companies that would be major institutions. But how do they function?

There are many persons in Bermuda who put their eggs into private companies and then private companies do not always outlive the life of the major person in that company. So, when persons get older, like their company, and they die off, those companies do not necessarily carry on. And what happens to persons who have put their lives working with some companies? Bermuda . . . what was that one down on Front Street there that the Honourable—

The Deputy Speaker: British American?

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, and I was thinking of a brother of yours who did very good work and many others who worked for a company all their life in insurance and that company had a principal owner down in Trinidad and just around the time of that recession, that company went under, and persons who had all their retirement packages connected to that got absorbed, evaporated, right there. Such things happened during the recession that was blamed on the Progressive Labour Party Government for many years by a former administration. I declare my interest there. I participated in that type of dialogue. That should tickle people up during . . . you know, you don't have to be responsible when you are in Opposition and we have certainly seen that in practice on many occasions of recent years.

But I am here to say that thankfully the seven increases of this administration are significant because the one thing that persons can depend on when it comes in this area, is where some of my constituents and many of my friends around here, *Kim*—no, they didn't call me Kim. *Swanie, we are looking for that government job.* A lot of people want to work for government. Why do they want to work for government? Because they can rely on that government pension.

Let me tell you. I named a couple of legacy institutions in this country. When it comes to the bottom line, they look after shareholders you know. They look after their principal persons. And they aren't absolved from recessions. We know when Butterfield had some difficulty and the Progressive Labour Party came to the rescue to the tune of a quarter of a billion dollars back in 2007 or 2008, thereabouts, to make sure that they survived. There were many persons who had all their shares, and they were evaporating, and a lot of them, you know, had lovely homes on the waters and around some very nice neighbourhoods in this country, so they had to recoup some of that, and shares went down to virtually near nothing.

But guess what? There are many workers who had their pensions hitched to that wagon as well. And persons when they have to make decisions as to whether or not their survival, whether or not they can get the dividends, those are folks—and I will declare my interest again. I have a mother who is a pensioner who worked for one of those major companies and I know, I know there are seniors out there today who put 35, 40 good years in major institutions today who lived . . . because we are living longer and longer, medicine, whose pensions today do not equal what their insurance payments are. And thankfully I got a colleague to my right who I have great . . . when it comes to financially matters, I will turn to my right, I am glad she is sitting a little closer, and she said, *Look, tell your momma she needs to do this, that and so . . . and don't be afraid to tell her, look, compare FutureCare to what is being offered.* And there are a lot of "my mothers" out there today.

There are a lot of my mothers out there today who put all their livelihood and stock into that pension that they are going to get. Some of them didn't because they offered them packages to leave. That's the way the private sector thinks. But that is what this government . . . this government here, the government that people want to come work for, that we can't hire everybody. Make sure that, what? That we are steady. And you know what they are seeing? We are solid as a rock.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We are solid as a rock when it comes to pensions for seniors. Why? Because there are seniors in this country who are land rich, as the Minister just before me who speaks . . . that acts on behalf, doesn't speak on behalf of seniors as much as she acts on behalf of seniors, very well. And I am here to tell you that they, right?, are land rich and cash poor. Because, let me tell you, I remember and those of us who find ourselves who dwell on the lower income bracket. I am glad the good Lord put me down there to dwell so that I can have . . . because he who knows it, feels it. And I can speak personally on behalf of those persons who feel it even worse. Right? Because when we go to say, let me, . . . we do not always eat the nachos and cheese and with the tomatoes on it because we like it. Sometimes that is all we can afford.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And there are seniors in this country today making choices between food and medication. And I want to say thank you to some companies out there today that are selling medication cheaper, so it makes it easier for a senior to spread it out.

And there are seniors today, I tease some of my senior friends. I call one lady, Ms. Foil. I call another lady, Ms. Ziplock Bag, and then we have a good chuckle. But look, if a senior goes out, there are seniors who will order a nice meal and share it. And they will have the Ziplock bag. They go to a function. There are some of us who will take a little bit of food to make sure . . . because it is expensive.

And you think the price of cheese went from $2.00 a block up to $6.00 and $8.00 for a block of rat

cheese (that we use to call it), when my granny used to put it, and it was rat cheese because that is what we used to put in the little mouse traps back in the day. I am old enough to know that. But today it is something that we would grate up and put on our macaroni and cheese.

You would think we would have eaten a lot of those wrong foods because we really liked to eat a diet that is causing us to be the number one candidates for diabetes? No! Because we can't afford the healthy foods the way others do. That is the reality of this country. That people . . . and so when they scoffed at the little incremental increases, I am thankful for the present and former Finance Minister who participated in these seven increases. Because they see the value.

You cannot just rely on, *Oh, I'll be in a position to give you an increase one day and be patient because money doesn't fall on trees.* While you can find a hundred million to give . . . and I love sailing. I love sailing. I come from a sailing family . . . to find the money from other places to give to that. And say, *Don't worry. It will trickle down.* Trickle-down economics has not been the best thing for us in this country.

And so, what I am here to say is this increase is significant because it speaks to the values that we stand for. And I just want to say that whilst we are giving that, that we need to certainly look at the responsibility of all those persons . . . because if I can get up here and put hand on heart and tell you that there are persons who have lived 25 to 35 years beyond their retirement and they worked for a major company that makes no bones out of celebrating how many millions they make and can pay to shareholders, but yet can't see the value of making sure that those persons whose shoulders they stand on cannot enjoy increases in their pensions.

And I know it to be true that there are pensioners from major companies in this country today whose pensions cannot even pay the insurance. Thankfully this Government has introduced FutureCare. Thankfully! That is how it all ties in. It all ties in. And it is still in existence today. That's the difference. And if people didn't have that option, where would they go? That's the difference, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, he who feels it, knows it. And I just have to say thank you because I know the benefits [that] these incremental increases have. I know it. And it is important for this country to realise that with even greater support for that type of mind-set we will all be in a better place because we see it in the business sections how people can celebrate millions while people cannot even afford to buy food, eating rat cheese. And they will blame it right on this same Government while they go to the bank and cash in their billions and enjoy the fats of the land. That's the truth, Ruth! Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this Order.

I recognise the Member from constituency 29.

Member, you have the floor.

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

I too . . . that's a good one. *That's the truth, Ruth.* I think the Honourable Member Kim Swan just said. *That's the truth, Ruth.* That's a good one. We need to say that more often.

Madam Deputy Speaker,—

An Hon. Member: Declare your interest.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will declare my interest as well. Yes, I will. So, I am one of those who will obviously take advantage of this Government's thoughtfulness when it comes to seniors. Yes, I will.

But I would like to give thanks to the Junior Minister and the Premier for actually doing something that if I remember correctly, going back to the former UBP Finance Minister David Saul, talked about back in the early to mid-1990s, was to do something about the pension and the contributions and the state it was in then and what we need to do to take care of the future. And the Honourable Member DeCouto said he supports this Order, but he said something about the current lack of action by this side.

And the only reason I had to bring up the history is because it has been a long, long time since David Saul was the Finance Minister, and he challenged his people at the time and us as an incoming Government in 1998 to do something. And many people have sat in this particular seat called "Government" and no one, no one, has dared to challenge the system and tried to make a difference and to try to make it feasible going forward.

This Government has and it has been decades in the making. Is it good enough to last 100 years? No. But will it extend and give us some breathing space? Yes. So, I thank the Junior Minister Furbert and the Finance Minister, our Premier, for actually having the wherewithal, the braveness, to make these changes which will put us in good stead for a few extra years.

And I think the Honourable Member opposite, DeCouto, said to . . . to 2044. I think it is actually to 2045. But I am sure that sometime during the next couple of years we will continue to monitor, and we will make sure that the seniors in this country and the future, and as I approach those years, it probably won't include me. But the fact of the matter is that we have made that attempt . . . not attempt. We have made the step of actually doing something that no one has had the nerve to do, or the [testicular] fortitude to do, in the last couple of decades. So, I thank them for that.

One thing I think it is important that we don't lose sight of, is today is a very significant day. For those who might not remember, today . . . it is eight years today that this Government came to—

Hon. E. David Burt: You are stealing my line.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Sorry about that.

Eight years today this Government came to power. Today! Eight years.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And we promised, we promised eight years ago that we would raise pensions for our seniors every year and what I will say is this: Promise made,—

An Hon. Member: Promise kept.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —Promise kept.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We did not tell our seniors that money don't grow on trees.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We didn't tell them that.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: At the same time, we didn't tell them that money doesn't grow on trees and the next week we found $100 million for a boat race.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We didn't do things like that. We told them that we will raise their pensions every year. And every year we have held strong, and we have done that. Do you know what that equates to, Madam Deputy Speaker? Over $3,000 per year. That is what it has amounted to. And some may say, *Oh, well, $3,000 over a year, divided by 365, so and so . . .* Madam Deputy Speaker, $3,000 per year for our seniors extra. That is what we have done.

Now, my Honourable Member, my colleague, Kim Swan, talked about FutureCare and then you had one of the Members opposite said, *Oh, that was 20 years ago.* Thank you for reminding us that we introduced FutureCare 20 years ago and for 20 years our seniors have been able to get insurance that before then, they never had.

An Hon. Member: The number one choice.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They never had access to.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Something that we, quite frankly, don't get credit for enough. That Mr. and Mrs. Smith will go down and get the same treatments that beforehand only those who lived down Tucker's Town and Fairylands could do and get.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is what we gave our people.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Let's talk about the cost of health care.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am very, very proud to stand before you today, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the chirpers can keep chirping over there all they like, because one thing they don't like is the fact that we continue to show the people of this country, we thank them for their confidence in running this country. We will continue to keep promises that we have made to look after each and every one as best we possibly can. Remember this, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are the future. They are the past.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this Order?

I recognise the Member from constituency 17.

Member, you have the floor.

An Hon. Member: Here we go!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: You have the floor, Member.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Hope you had a good lunch.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: While some may make jokes of what we are doing today, it is extremely important for the people of Bermuda that we advance their pensions. It is also extremely important as a Government that we ensure that we live up to the obligations of a social contract that we set with the people.

I know that many of us when canvassing on that trail, seniors often asked, *When will I get my next increase?* We said we were going to deliver that increase and we have delivered that increase. And I know that constituents within my constituency would be pleased that they have a Government that continues to prioritise them. And that is what this is about.

This is about us recognising that pension is a critical social protection and without it . . . without it there will be poverty and suffering amongst our seniors in Bermuda. But this social protection represents a buffer.

It is also a lifeline to many Bermudians. Persons receive this social protection even though they did not contribute. And notwithstanding what one's contributions were, we said that we will continue to advance the social protection, and we will continue to advance pensions so that we can ensure that person's income is at least keeping pace with the cost of living.

You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, elections matter. And this Government has made it a priority to ensure that we not just advance pensions but we also advance other benefits and reduce taxes that make Bermuda a better place for our seniors. From a labour perspective, I am extremely concerned with the fact that notwithstanding Government advancing this particular benefit we have many employers who take funds from employees for the purpose of placing it into this benefit and the money never reaches. That is criminal. But when we talk about sustainability, that is never really a broad part of the equation that the theft that is taking place in Bermuda. The bad conduct of some employers jeopardises the sustainability of a fund that benefits so many.

Notwithstanding what the fiscal position was, this Government has made a determination that we will continue to advance pension rates. There should be no chirping coming from the other side. It should just simply be our acknowledgement that the Government is doing what is required. But I recognise we refer to it as "chirping" but what I identify it as being is just "screeching."

You see, when we are doing what we are required to do, what we are doing what even their constituents are asking us to do, they have to then try to discredit us. They cannot simply support the noble activities of the Government. For us, doing this is second nature. So, we do not make excuses. We do not provide pension increases just before an election.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: And the screeching continues.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Because while we are effecting change and making changes that benefit the people of Bermuda, the only power that the Opposition currently has is to sit on the sidelines and screech.

But we are making meaningful progress for the people of Bermuda. We are showing our seniors that we care for them. We do recognise that there are challenges that our seniors face and we are working to address those challenges as best as we possibly can. We have extended the benefits for financial assistance. We reviewed every category of benefit and made wholesale changes to the schedule of benefits from a financial assistance standpoint. That is a Government that is being responsive to the needs of the people of Bermuda. And there is still more that needs to be done. And this is a Government that is committed to accomplishing that.

We are also going to ensure . . . and not just pensions. But ensure that there is dignity in the workplace. And so additional to pension increases today, you saw where we advanced the minimum wage rate for seniors who may still be in the workforce and getting remunerated at the minimum wage. So, today will be a double good day for those individuals who benefit from both increases.

This falls in alignment with the principles that are set out in the ILO [International Labour Organization] as well when we start to talk about sustainable development. We have positive economic growth in Bermuda. And when we do things like this, this is us sharing that growth. This is us ensuring that that growth is inclusive. This is us ensuring that we do not leave our seniors behind. This is what a responsible, responsive Government does. This is what a Government does that is able to maintain a strong fiscal position so that we have the fiscal capacity to provide increases.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I celebrated my 43rd birthday on—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: I celebrated my 43rd birthday on Sunday.

An Hon. Member: Happy birthday.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And what I determined to do on my 43rd birthday was to simply go and visit my grandmother in the hospital. So, I spent the day with my grandmother at the hospital, and she was pleased. But as I looked at her in her condition, she was in good spiriits. But she was what mattered to me that day. And today, knowing I increased this, I know that she benefits from this as well. And so, when I look at making the connection regarding what we do and the people whom it impacts—my grandmother, my mother, my father—knowing that they will use that money to take care of their needs, brings me a great level of comfort. It brings me a great level of . . . it adds meaningfulness to the work that I do as a legislator.

When I leave here today, knowing that we increased the minimum wage and that we increased pension for our seniors, when somebody asks me, *How was your day?* I am going to say it was very productive.

I am satisfied with the work I have done on behalf of the thousands of people in Bermuda who will benefit. And then I look forward to the work that I will continue to do to ensure that we build a better Bermuda for the people of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a lot more work to be done and we have a team that is committed to the execution of that work. I thank the Junior Minister for bringing this Bill. I fully support this Bill, and I know that my constituents support this increase. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this contributory pension amendment?

There are no others. I call on the . . . Oh, sorry.

I recognise the Premier and Minister of Finance. I was thinking that you brought the Bill. I forgot it was the Junior Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: No, no, no, no, no. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to give any Members of the Opposition time to clean up the Shadow Minister's comments, but none of them wanted to.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We thought they would.

Hon. E. David Burt: They have a funny way of supporting things, you know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to certainly thank the Junior Minister of Finance for advancing this particular Order today and setting out the rationale for this action. It is great to have someone who can assist me in the Ministry of Finance. We had two rather complex Bills today so I needed to make sure I could devote my attention to the corporate income tax while he ably advances and set out the record.

And what I find, you know, particularly interesting, though the One Bermuda Alliance did say that they support this change, I have to address what can only be described in my view as a remarkable display of political amnesia from the Honourable Shadow Minister of Finance. Because the One Bermuda Alliance said that this increase, a 2.3 per cent increase in seniors' pensions, will not be felt by the recipients.

Madam Deputy Speaker, only in the world of the One Bermuda Alliance is $468 more a year for our seniors considered nothing. Only in their world, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: I will not recognise your point of order since you were not on the floor when the comment was made. And I would advise all Members to realise that if they do want to make a point of order, they should actually be sitting in Chambers so that they can get up and make their point of order.

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

I will continue. Only in their world is helping more than 15,000 Bermudians who have worked all their lives somehow insignificant. But yet, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House, and he is implying that the OBA has said things that the OBA has not said. Those things that he implies the OBA has said, that we are minimising the impact of this Bill, that we said that these things are not good, in fact, we supported this Bill. And our concerns are more to the future. So, I would like the Premier to take back his comments saying that we do not think that the amounts of money are good. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh-oh!

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I started this by saying a remarkable political amnesia from this side, but it is clear that the Honourable Member does not even remember what he said 40 minutes ago. Because everyone heard him say that, *Yes, this increase is here but people say it is not enough.* That is what he said.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: That is what he said. So here is the thing. Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, only in the One Bermuda Alliance's world is $468 more per year for our seniors—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He is . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Premier is misleading the House, and he is putting words in my mouth and the One Bermuda Alliance's mouth that we did not say.

I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, feedback from the public . . . I am relaying messages that we have heard. They should not be attributed to us. That while these increases are welcome, more is needed. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I would appreciate it if the Premier would stop misleading this House about what we have said or not said. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will continue because, see, this is what they like to do. They want to say it is somebody else who said it, not me, without standing by the words, forgetting . . . or trying to obscure—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. He is going to have a difficult time now.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He is misleading the House. He again is intentionally putting words in the mouth of the Opposition that have never been said. Misleading the public and this House, and yourself.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Hon. E. David Burt: I shall continue, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Because only in the One Bermuda Alliance's world is $468 a year more for seniors not a good thing.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is sadly misinforming and misleading this House. There are many people out there who need more money than that number that he quoted. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, let me continue, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Because see, it is important. This is the same party, Madam Deputy Speaker, that made our seniors wait nearly five years for a single increase to their pension. And when did they finally decide that seniors should have more? On the eve of an election.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: That's right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No!

Hon. E. David Burt: Not every year, not every two years. Not every three years. Wait the entire time and then on the eve of an election go ahead and put forward a pension increase.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Trying to hoodwink our seniors!

Hon. E. David Burt: Making a whole lot of chirping but no point of order because people remember the record.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: They remember the record and they understand.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so—

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: We can have comments, but can we just keep it at—

Hon. E. David Burt: Undertones.

The Deputy Speaker: —a level so it doesn't interfere with the debate and my having to focus and pay attention to what is being said.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You see, the challenge is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they do not like to be reminded of their record.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they do not.

Hon. E. David Burt: But the people of Bermuda and especially the seniors of Bermuda remember the record.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, yes, they do.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: They remember the fact that the One Bermuda Alliance did not increase seniors' pensions for the entire time that they were in office until 2017 on the eve of an election.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: That is correct. No point of order at all. But here is the thing. Here is the thing. That election, Madam Deputy Speaker, was exactly eight years ago today, on 18 July 2017. And how poetic is that? Because eight years later—

An Hon. Member: A lot of seniors left the country.

Hon. E. David Burt: Eight years later it is the fact that they have not learned their lesson.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They haven't.

Hon. E. David Burt: They have not learned their lesson. So, whether or not the Honourable Member wants to say *people are telling us* or whatever it is, let me say this, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is this Government that is keeping its promise and delivering annual pension increases for seniors in line with the rate of inflation.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So maybe, *maybe, maybe, maybe,* Madam Deputy Speaker, they should mark this day on their calendar of the day of never learning their lesson.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Because the people would have heard, *the people would have heard,* again, finding a way to criticise what the Progressive Labour Party Government is doing. But allow me to say this, Madam Deputy Speaker, we in that election campaign that we won eight years ago, we promised our seniors that we would increase pensions by the rate of inflation. And guess what? We have not done it once, nor twice, but this is the seventh increase in pensions since 2017.

And just let me repeat it for the record in case persons did not hear what the Junior Minister of Finance said when he presented this. [In] 2017, there was an increase; 2018, there was an increase; 2019, there was an increase; 2021, there was an increase; 2022, there was an increase; 2023, there was an increase; 2024, there was an increase and today in 2025, there is another increase. Making sure that all of those increases were either at the rate of inflation or above the rate of inflation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That is consistency. That is respect for our seniors, and that is what keeping promises looks like. Compare that, eight years later. Compare that to the One Bermuda Alliance's record. Four and a half years of no pension increase until the eve of an election.

Now, again, Members have said that this increase, there needs to be more done. Okay. That's fine. But here is the thing. This increase matters. It matters to the seniors who will receive it, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it is easy to say . . . easy to say, that more must be done. But it rings absolutely hollow coming from an Opposition that made our seniors wait four and a half years for a pension increase. Absolutely hollow.

And let's be clear. That list that I read out, Madam Deputy Speaker, do you know what that means for a senior citizen? That means that in the last eight years, since we were returned to office, the maximum seniors' pension has increased by $3,053 a year. Let me say that again. The maximum pension paid to seniors has increased by $3,053 a year since we were returned to office. That's real money, Madam Deputy Speaker. Real thing.

And as the Honourable Deputy Premier said, and the Honourable Minister of Economy and Labour, and the Honourable Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, and the Honourable Member from constituency 2 have said, this is one part of a record of delivery for those in the community who need more.

Year after year, increase after increase, and whether or not it is reducing payroll taxes for 86 per cent of workers while increasing them on those who earn more, whether or not it was a three-year freeze in government health insurance premiums that was done last year, whether or not it is cutting energy taxes by 80 per cent after the party opposite doubled those energy taxes, whether or not it is the increase in financial assistance to persons inside of our community, mainly accessed, Madam Deputy Speaker, by our seniors and those with disabilities, or whether or not it is the establishment of Bermuda's first minimum wage and as mentioned, the increase of Bermuda's first minimum wage or the record investment in affordable housing. Housing of course as well, that our seniors can access.

That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is our record. Eight years since, eight years since seniors are $3,053 better off a year than they were underneath the One Bermuda Alliance.

So, what I will say is, the Honourable Shadow Minister can say *people are telling me* and people are saying this and all the rest, here is the reality. Eight years later the people of this country still are not feeling their policies because they know what their policies are. We know what their policies are. Meanwhile this Progressive Labour Party Government is delivering on its promises to the electorate. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is why the people trusted us in 2017, trusted us in 2020, and again in 2025. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is why we stand here today as Government

and not Opposition. So, eight years after election defeats, they have not learned their lesson.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, let them continue to belittle $468 a year. Let them continue to belittle the $3,000 more that our seniors are getting. But the people listening will remember—

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

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading and imputing improper motive]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance is misleading the House and is imputing improper motive. The Opposition supported this Bill and is not belittling the numbers in the Bill at all.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let them downplay, Madam Deputy Speaker, the $3,000 increase over the last eight years—

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

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yet again the Honourable Premier and Honourable Minister of Finance is getting a bit enthusiastic. The Opposition supported this Bill and is not downplaying the impact of the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

An Hon. Member: New word. New word. New word.

[Laughter]

Another Hon. Member: Some other words.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let me put it this way. They can't argue with my opinion. So, in my opinion, when the Shadow Minister of Finance says *people are telling me this won't make a difference,* let me be clear, we are the ones who are responsible for bringing this increase that will give seniors $468 more a year and—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier misled the House when he said that I said that people are telling me this won't make a difference. He misstated what I said. I am sure . . . I know he is very excited. But he perhaps forgot what we said was that while this is appreciated there are people who say more can be done, which I believe he has already addressed in his remarks.
Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, here we are, Madam Deputy Speaker. More can be done.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, that's what he said.

Hon. E. David Burt: Guess who is doing the "more"?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh-oh!

Hon. E. David Burt: The Progressive Labour Party.
Guess who the people of this country know cannot be trusted on increasing seniors' pensions. The One Bermuda Alliance. So let me close with this, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yet again the Premier, the Honourable Minister of Finance is misleading the House. He has just said the OBA cannot be trusted in increasing it; we just voted for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: [They] haven't voted for anything.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No they haven't.

Hon. E. David Burt: They haven't voted for anything. And we all know the rules. That only the Government can move an increase of something that will affect

the public finances. Something that they had four years to do but refused to do before the election.

So let me close with this, Madam Deputy Speaker. Under the OBA seniors heard that money doesn't grow on trees.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did.

Hon. E. David Burt: But Madam Deputy Speaker, under the PLP money grows every year in our seniors' pockets with yet another pension increase.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier and Finance Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2025?

There are no other Members. I call on the Junior Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I will just say that I am sure that the public has heard very clearly that this Government cares about our seniors and that we have been consistent over the years to ensure that they are benefited from the progress that we have made throughout this Island.

So, in those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to His Excellency the Governor.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that this Order be approved and that a message be sent to the Governor.

Are there any objections?

There being none; so approved.

Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2025 was approved.]

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: I believe it is the third readings. I call on the Minister of Finance.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 be read the third time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Corporate [Income Tax] Amendment Act 2025 be read a third time by its title only.

Any objections to that?

So moved.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 be read a third time and passed.

Are there any objections to that motion?

There are none; so moved.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 12 September 2025.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any Members who wish to speak to that motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 11. Member, you have the floor.

CARICOM MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Christopher Famous: I won't be long, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I see a lot of colours that are giving me the heebie-jeebies.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Deputy Premier said, eight years ago the people of Bermuda put their trust in us—

An Hon. Member: Again.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, once again.

And a few months ago, they put their trust in us again. However, trust must be earned, not just words, not just deeds, but leadership, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, seven years ago when we were in the House, which enslaved persons built, someone had to stand to their feet and point out the hypocrisy of having a coloniser's name associated with our Emancipation Day celebrations. Some resisted the facts that the two should not mix. Some thought it was blasphemy. Others strived to justify why it should remain. But the reality is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you cannot celebrate emancipation one day and then celebrate somebody who was on their way to colonise people in America the next day. The two just don't mix.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, if my memory serves me correctly in the year 2020 your capacity as the Minister of Culture, you saw fit to change the name from that coloniser's name to the name of our National Hero, undoubtedly more than even Bermuda's National Hero, a hero for enslaved persons around the world, Mary Prince. I won't go into the history of Mary Prince, but Mary Prince had to stand her ground.

Mary Prince, for those who don't know, was born in Devonshire, Brackish Pond, as they call it. And she was moved over to out at Spanish Point where Dandy Town Club is now. And then she was taken by force to the Turks and Caicos Islands by the Darrell family. Who, along with families such as the Frith family, the Lightbourne family, the Astwood family, the Butterfield family, the Swan families, and the Talbot families took thousands of enslaved Bermudians down to Turks and Caicos Islands to rake salt. At one point they took one-quarter of the population. It is in the history books. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the fact is we may not have plantations like, I don't know, in Virginia or Tennessee, but we were enslaved.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you allow me I would like to read something from historian Cyril Packwood, somebody from St. George's.

[No audible reply]

Mr. Christopher Famous: This is what Mr. Packwood had to say.

"It is true that many Bermudian slaves did not come directly from Africa, but from an intermediary destination such as the West Indies." He goes on to say, "Slaves arrived in Bermuda from ships trading in the West Indies, from pirate ships, [and from] shipwrecks . . . ."

You see the fact is, Madam Deputy Speaker, a journey from Bermuda to Africa would take a little bit of time. A journey [from] Bermuda to another Caribbean island, a lot shorter time. So, the reality is the majority of enslaved persons did not come here directly from Africa. They came from other Caribbean islands.

So, what is my point, Madam Deputy Speaker? We may not geographically be in the Caribbean. There is no arguing about that. We are in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, north Atlantic Ocean. But we are of the Caribbean, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is no doubting that. People of all complexions are of the Caribbean. Not everybody in Bermuda, but not everybody from the Caribbean is, let's say, my complexion.

You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, around the world global organisations are formed by people, persons, countries, in geographic areas. The European Union, we have the EU—sorry. [The] European countries formed the EU [European Union]. North American countries formed NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]. African countries formed the African Union. And Pacific countries formed a bloc called APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation]. So, 1973 onward, islands and countries in the Caribbean, because not every CARICOM member is an island, formed a bloc called CARICOM, Caribbean Community, CARICOM.

Like any other organisation there are ups and downs. There is no perfect union. There is no . . . everybody agreeing on everything. But there are some benefits to unity, Madam Deputy Speaker. In 2015, CARICOM, along with other countries, helped to form The Paris Agreement which forced industrial countries to come to pledge to contribute to funding for climate change for those countries such in the . . . in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean that will be affected adversely by climate change.

In 2018, something that we discussed today. The United Kingdom, our colonisers, attempted to force an Order in Council on us to have a public register of beneficial ownership, the biggest money launderers want to put us out of business. But be that as it may, CARICOM came to our aid, not just us, but the Cayman Islands [and] the Virgin Islands came to our aid to stand up for us.

More recently, Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2025, earlier this year, the President of the United States, another coloniser country, attempted to put a levy or tax on all ships that were made in China (as he says) and charge $1.5 million per voyage. So that would have translated to increased costs for everything in Bermuda. CARICOM via the CARICOM Private Sector Organization (CPSO), along with others, successfully lobbied the United States Government and that got (I am going to say) a stay of execution.

Well, my point is, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that those are three clear examples of what CARICOM has done to help to benefit not just Bermuda but other islands.

So, as I close, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I talked about a young lady, there is a young Bermudian lady in our midst now who is doing her best to bridge the geographic gap between Bermuda and other

Atlantic and Caribbean islands. At times she comes under fire from others. But I encourage her to stand her ground. I encourage her that as she gets the information to share it with the people. And I encourage her to help educate the people who despite the geographic differences, we are of the Caribbean.

And I will close with a quote, as Mary Prince said, "[T]o be free is very sweet." Minister Lightbourne, stand your ground. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

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

IT ISSUES DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Madam [Deputy Speaker]. And what a good time to be in motion to adjourn at this time. It is early.

There are two or three things that I would like to address during this motion to adjourn time. And one of those is something that I spoke to quite some time ago and that is the challenges that we are having with health insurance and premiums, premiums increasing.

But before I get to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want the public to understand that earlier today we did have challenges, and we recognise that we had challenges with getting emails through. And after having some chats with the Speaker and with the likes of yourself, and others, it is understandable that we still have a challenge since the cyberattack has taken place.

I am imploring the Minister who has oversight of the IT Department to work with some urgency. I recognise also that we sent out a notice to IT to try and figure out what is going on and they are still trying to get to the bottom of this. But it is happening on a more frequent basis. And I am acknowledging that there are many within Parliament who are seeking to adjust and make this . . . and fix this. But when we have a cyberattack and the effect of that creates a situation whereby we are not as effective as we can be in Parliament, that is a serious, serious problem. You know, I kind of jokingly said, *My goodness. Those—*

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What's that?

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order, Premier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: I would hate for the Honourable Member to mislead the House. But unless there is something that I don't know, I am not entirely certain that it has been established what the cause of the information . . . as the Honourable Member just said, that they are trying to seek the cause. So, to be tying it to something else I think is probably going a little bit too far.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, and I can appreciate that.

I am only going off of what was said to me by Members of Parliament who run this House, that they thought that it was probably a residual from the cyberattack. And all that I am repeating is what was said to me. These are not my words, but what was said to me. So, I understand the Premier getting up on that.

And we have seen in other instances where statements have not gone through, email to yourselves and Parliament and the like. But we have got to get to the bottom of this. And I would appreciate if the Minister who oversees and has oversight with the IT Department can get to the bottom of this. Because this is continuing to happen.

And it is rather random when it comes up. You know. And I am trying to avoid and ensure that, you know, we don't come to our own conclusions in that we do have facts in front of us, but rather jokingly we said, *Well, my goodness. The only questions that got through were the oral questions and they were from [Shadow] Minister Fahy. All of the written questions didn't come out.* You know? And so, we need to get to the bottom of this.

It is not . . . I mean, quite frankly, I understand and know how it came about, and we would have been today in the House presenting these questions and no one would have known about the fact that Ministers did not get to it unless there was a Member . . . one of our Members. And I will just say, it was myself who questioned what was going on and found out, *Oh, the questions didn't go through.* Otherwise, we would have been here today.

So, we can't have that situation. It is embarrassing for all of us to be in a position like this here. So, I just want to make sure that the public understands that we are all working on this here, trying to come to a conclusion.

But when we have questions, and many of the times when we are giving questions, it is coming from the public. And they need to also understand what is going on. And so, in all fairness I am not casting any blame or doubt on anyone. We can do better. And I am

looking forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, to getting . . . coming to a conclusion and finding some solutions to that. So, I just wanted the public to be aware of that.

GOVERNMENT HAS GOT TO DO MORE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Now, one of the other things that I . . . was mentioned earlier today in jest that the Opposition is a bit moody. So, I had a bit of a chuckle about that.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You were worried about St. George's.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And quite frankly, it is of my opinion that sometimes when we ask questions it is presumed, or it may be interpreted that there is some conspiracy behind some of these questions.

I want to be clear to this House, to all 36 Members. I don't have to justify my question. I am asking a question for a reason. But for me to have to justify or to seem like I have to defend it because it is some kind of conspiracy, these are questions that are being asked and if they fall in line with where you believe that we are in order, Madam Deputy Speaker, then they need to be answered. And if they are not answered, then we expect an answer at some point in time to these questions.

There are still outstanding questions that have been asked that have not been answered by this Government. And we would like to get those answers. So, when the Premier gets up and says that the Opposition is moody, let me remind the Premier, since he has had a wonderful prelude to the motion to adjourn already on a Bill, yes, people are moody. They are moody! They are definitely moody.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Premier.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Given that we are being very technical, that is not what I said. I said, *the Opposition is clearly in a mood today.*

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What's your point of order?

Hon. E. David Burt: Misleading the House.

So, just quote me correctly, *Clearly in a mood today.*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. We are definitely in a mood, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: You are.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Farmers are in a mood because they haven't been listened to. That is what they feel. Fishermen are in a mood because they feel like this Government has not done it due justice. People who are sick are going to the hospital having to sit in an aisle in a hallway. They are moody too. Young people are moody because, guess what? Now they think that possibly they are going to have to work until they are 70 in order to get their pension. So, yes, people are moody. And I would dare say the unions are moody. All you got to do is open up the paper today. Everybody is moody. Something is going on.

And despite the fact that this Government believes that it is doing all of these wonderful things, I have said it time and time again, way more needs to be done. And you can hide behind the fact that every year you have been giving increases to seniors, but guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker? In the four years that we were Government we were in deep debt. [We] were trying to figure out how we were going to pay civil servants. So, excuse us for trying to figure out where we needed to put monies, but that was a situation we inherited. It was not something that we created. It was a situation that the OBA inherited.

And excuse me, Madam Deputy Speaker, for speaking up for the America's Cup. Because quite frankly—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —it brought $300 million back into this country and this Government cannot even get a hotel built.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, they can preach all they want. But when you are running an economy for this country, it is a balance and a give and take. Not everyone is going to be happy. They already know that the public are not happy with many things.

The economy is not growing fast enough to keep people from going under water. It is not growing fast enough. And all we are trying to say is . . . encourage this Government. Yes, it is a good thing, many of the things they are doing. It's good. But we got to pick up the pace. And if picking up the pace means getting a $300 million injection into this economy, I'm waiting for this Government to do it. It is well over time. And the people are waiting and waiting. And guess what?

Under this Government, yes, Bermuda is in a mood. Because emigration over the last eight years has been unprecedented.

So, this Government can preach all it wants, but guess what? There is another side of the coin here. And people are waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting!

An Hon. Member: Yes!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And while they are waiting, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are flying out of here. They are moving out of here. And while they are waiting, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are also contemplating whether or not they need to move. So, I pray that CIT comes in and does some wonders, because we are in a mood. We are in a mood. And just as I said, as soon as the Opposition has something to say, it is all doom and gloom. I can say that I agree with this, and I agree with that—

[General uproar]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —and I agree with that. And they are saying *listen to me.*

Guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker. Guess what?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It wasn't me who was marching with the farmers. It wasn't me who was upset by the fishermen. It wasn't me who was upset with the taxi drivers. It was those industries themselves who came out and spoke up for themselves, not the OBA. And the OBA is echoing those sentiments. Something has got to happen!

How long does it take to get a vertical farm here? How long?

How long is it going to take to get Southampton Princess up where it needs to be? How long?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And how long?

So that is what I am saying. So, I am going to leave that to that.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Because the more that the PLP keeps saying it is doing, guess what? It is doing more damage.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Make an impact! This is a country's economy. And yes, we have interest groups that we have got to take care of. But we need to take care of this economy and do better.

And so, this Government has promised us, *Oh, it's going to do better.* Well, while it is doing better, we are going to hold them accountable. Simple as that. Industries are going to hold them accountable. Young people are frustrated. We see the situation that is going on out there. We got to do more. And if getting up and saying *we got to do more* in this sense has to happen, then we are going to continue to do it.

INSURANCE COMPANY MERGER ALARM RAISED OVER

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And so, I move onto my last subject.

[Inaudible interjections and desk thumping]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Something that I think that we can all get together on.

An Hon. Member: Now what?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am extremely concerned. I have spoken about it before, and I am speaking again about it.

The last time I spoke to this insurance issue I said that the war is coming. Now we see amalgamation of insurance companies. And just this week, I want to give the Minister of Health . . . this article that was in the paper it is several . . . it is like an insert. It was great information. I mean, really . . . thank you, Minister. It was really, really good information in here.

But then I turned over the page and I got to this fellow, Peter Lozier, head of a department within BF&M in this amalgamated Argus insurance. I declare my interest. I was a CEO for People's Pharmacy for many years. So, I still keep in touch with what is going on. My wife is a pharmacist. And there are numbers in here that are not correct. And it is the second time he has put them in here.

Now, I am hoping that somebody in the insurance industry is listening because I made a call to Mr. Lozier. And he has not called me back. I left a great message. I repeated the message I think three times. I want clarification on where we are going when we start talking about affecting the health premiums in Bermuda, and prescriptions. Because one thing I am sure of, premiums are going up every year. They don't lose. And I will say Government has to take cuts and cuts and cuts. And the question Government has is, *Well, what can we do?* There needs to be a serious conversation, whether it is Cabinet or the Board, whoever it is, to sit down there and go over this. Because what I read in here from him, all the blame is going on to retail operators who have pharmacies.

But guess what is happening to the pharmacies? They are being invaded by the insurance companies. We stipulated that doctors could not have pharmacies. But we are allowing, after it has taken years . . . and we talk about emancipation. It has taken years for Blacks to get to a certain level. Now they are owning their own pharmacies. And guess what? They are under threat from the big boys. Because if you think that BF&M and Argus coming together is not a threat to the retail pharmacy, it is a huge threat. CG [Coralisle Group] has already made that known. They got a pharmacy!—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What about the doctors?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —And they are growing.

The doctor's offices? We are getting to that. And now the insurance companies also want to have doctor's offices as well. It is a conflict of interest. And then for me to read in this paper where the BF&M . . . and I am calling him out because he needs to call me back.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am calling him out because he is in here saying that, *Well, Ozempic*—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ozempic, a drug that allows you . . . the side effect was losing weight. But it was for diabetics. Right? To help them to lower their sugar levels. But he quotes in here, *Oh, well, Ozempic over in Germany is only $100-and something.* Well, come on. Be transparent. Germany is over there . . . they got manufacturers making Ozempic, and the other drug similar to it. So of course they are going to get it for that price.

By the time it gets to Bermuda it has gone through two or three jobbers from the wholesaler to get to Bermuda and then you put on top of that shipping charges. Now many of these things are duty free, right? Some of them. But come on now! You can't compare us to Germany and the population that they have. Look at our premiums. Germany's premiums are not as high as ours and the insurance company is making sure that its shareholders get their due. And Bermudians are paying the price for it.

Now, I understand that [there] aren't as many people here, so there are going to be these mergers. I get that. But we can do better, and we cannot be sandwiching the pharmaceutical industry and saying, *Oh, well, we are going to come after them and get them to lower their prices and the like.*

The pharmacy will put in, let's just arbitrarily say, a 35 per cent markup on what it brings in. Yes. So, that is in order for them to survive in Bermuda. They know that if they don't have that minimum markup, they have to close their doors down. So, the only outlet is to start looking at the wholesalers and how we can get better pricing from the wholesalers. That is what we need to do.

Now, it skirted around some of these things . . . and then when I read this pamphlet, I mean, we got some people in some dire straits and the Government . . . I am going to give you credit. You are doing wonderful with the programme that you do have. But guess what? At the same time, you are making a sacrifice. But these private companies are not making the sacrifice. I have not heard one of them say, *Well, we took a loss this year because we wanted it for the people of Bermuda.* What they have done is, 12 per cent—

An Hon. Member: [It is] 21 per cent.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Madam Deputy Speaker, 21 per cent increases.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: A couple million dollars net profit per month.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, something has got to happen. And the only legislative body in this Island is right here. We can't leave it to the Board. They can go. I am imploring that this Government sit down to the Peter Lozier's and the like. So, if he doesn't want to answer calls, show up on his doorstep. Now, sometimes he is in and out of the Island. I know he goes back and forth. But something has got to give because this is not fair.

And so those pharmacies that we do have that are existing, they are going to be gobbled up. Because I can assure you that with this new merger that we have seen, it is already in the works. CG's got it. Now the other insurance companies want their pharmacy relationship as well. And they disguise it in other ways; that they don't really own it. But somebody owns it. Or they are negotiating with these pharmacies. And the pharmacies when the owners are willing to sit down and negotiate on how we can make this better . . . but it can't be at the dictatorship of an insurance company that has just merged.

We are now moving . . . and this is where I implore. And I am on the side of this labour movement. We are moving from—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —We moved from monopolies to private enterprise, where everybody can get a stake in this here, to now moving back to monopolies. That is what we are doing! And these big insurance companies have the money and the proceeds to be able to do it.

So, if the Health Minister, the Premier, the Deputy Premier . . . I will show up at the office at BF&M, *Let's have a talk.* Because I am paying insurance to

BF&M. I saw the increase. And just between my wife and I for insurance—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —It is almost $5,000 a month.

An Hon. Member: What?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Almost $5,000 a month, with the increase. That's incredible for health insurance.

An Hon. Member: You are paying $5,000.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay? That . . . the public is paying . . . Listen, man. People who have plans that are far less generous than mine are paying $4,000 a month. Private people. Seniors, paying that kind of money. We got to do something about this.

An Hon. Member: OBA seeks price control.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ooh . . . OBA seeks price control.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That is not what I said. That is an amazing assumption that cripples an economy like ours to say that . . . to say that! There needs to be cooperation with the industries to come to a situation . . . I am not talking about regulating where you got to go in . . . I mean, the pharmacies are already upset that you are trying to regulate them to death. You got to give up this information and that information and that information under a labour Government. Under a labour Government! And then we even threatened to lock them up. But we fixed that real quick!

So, we got to make some headway here. There is room for us to sit down with these insurance companies and understand where they are heading with this. Because otherwise these 2.3 [per cent] increases that we are doing on this and that every year, mean nothing when your health insurance goes up 21 per cent. Nothing!

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

[Desk thumping]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: And before I recognise the Member from constituency 4, let me recognise the PLP Senator Mischa Fubler, who is in the Gallery.

[Desk thumping]

[Motion to adjourn, continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I almost feel like, Madam Deputy Speaker, after that speech there we all should be in a mood.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes! Well said. I'm in a mood.

An Hon. Member: I'm joining you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Jesus!

We should be in a mood because, you know, since we want to bring up history, Madam Deputy Speaker, our people have not forgotten Pathway to Status. Our people have not forgotten the lack of transparency and public consultation from the OBA, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: On what?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Our people have not forgotten the airport redevelopment deal—

Some Hon. Members: Oh-oh!

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —that created a controversial public-private partnership.

An Hon. Member: Like the hospital.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Our people have not forgotten the public sector job cuts and economic pressure. Our people have not forgotten perceived disconnect between our Government, the Government at that time, and the grassroots community.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I won't go any further into those things, but I just want to

remind the listening public that once we want to bring up history that—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You brought the history up.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: You brought the history up.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Ah! Ah! Your Premier did.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Pay attention . . . pay attention. The Premier brought up history.

An Hon. Member: They are in a mood now.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: They are in a mood now, yes.

[Laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: We are in a mood now.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Don't get too personal.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But what I do want to speak about today, I am not going to speak about that anymore—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You are offline.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: You are offline.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Just speak to the Chair and then—

ELDER ABUSE

Hon. Tinee Furbert: What I do want to speak about today, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the other day I was driving my car on Shelley Bay stretch, and I came across . . . there was a lady. She was on the side of the road. She was a senior. She was on the side of the road . . . I want to take this opportunity to speak to seniors. And I was going east on Shelley Bay stretch, and I had turned around, it was probably 30 minutes later, because when I passed this senior, she was on the side of the road and she looked a bit confused.

And so, as I drove back, you know, I was looking out for her to see if I could still see her. And she was walking and, to me, she still appeared to be disoriented and confused. So, I pulled over and I asked her whether or not she needed any help with anything. And she told me no, she was fine, and that she was walking to her sister-in-law's house and, you know, she had her little purse with her.

But still, she didn't quite seem to be as though she knew where she was going. And soon after I had stopped, someone else had stopped, Madam Deputy Speaker. And they knew this lady and they said to her, you know, I could her the lady saying to her, *Where are you going? Do you need any help?* And this lady was indeed lost and confused about her whereabouts.

And I bring this up, Madam Deputy Speaker, because ageing in Bermuda, particularly when it comes to confusion and dementia, is not an easy thing. Imagine retiring and you are just in your home and you have nothing to do. Life is for purpose. And we must always put some purposeful activities into our daily routines and create goals every day. If not, we will forget the days of the week. We will forget what time it is. And this all lends to persons becoming confused.

On 15 June of this year, we recognised World Elder Abuse Day. And abuse, Madam Deputy Speaker, on our seniors is running rampant. We can applaud the increase in pensioners or seniors' pensions, but there are many cases, Madam Deputy Speaker, where our pensioners or our seniors' pensions are being pulled right from underneath them.

There comes a time when our seniors . . . for whatever reason, as we age we have limitations as it relates to mobility. And we are not able to get out of the house as we once were able to. And when you are out of your house, you do spend more money when you are out. Right? Anyone can attest to . . . you say, *Oh, I don't want to spend any money, just stay inside.* And so, our seniors' pensions can build up, or that money can build up because they are not using it.

But I want to tell those people out there who are abusing or financially exploiting seniors, you have no right to do so. You have no right to physically harm our seniors. There was a case that was recently in the paper here in regard to a caregiver who had assaulted a senior. Apparently, they had pushed around their wheelchair and dumped something on their head.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I know that it can be difficult in understanding dementia or confusion. Or believing that someone has capacity or they understand. But our seniors who are older are vulnerable. And they can be saucy. They surely can be saucy. But it still gives no right, Madam Deputy Speaker, for someone to push around a senior, someone who is frail. To cuss them off, to put their hands on them, to neglect them also because we see that happening. To take their money. It gives people no right to do that. And usually it happens right within a person's family—their children, their grandchildren.

Yesterday I received a phone call, and it was someone who was making a complaint about what someone was doing to a particular senior. But they did not feel comfortable speaking up about it. They wanted to tell me, but they didn't want to go to the appropriate authority to speak up about it. And I am encouraging anyone who has any sort of concern about abuse on a senior that you do report it. Report it to Ageing and

Disability Services. Know all the dynamics, because sometimes things that you see or, you know, you might be unsure about, you have to get all the facts before you make assumptions. But we are encouraging you to speak about it because any senior who is vulnerable, Madam Deputy Speaker, we should not be taking advantage of them. So, it sickens me to know that we have people out there who think that they can mishandle or mistreat our seniors.

So, I just wanted to take this time to recognise and to make everyone aware, while World Elder Abuse is known and acknowledged on June 15, that it is important that we recognise that this occurs every day behind closed doors. And to make sure that you are being brave and courageous within your own families to speak up about it.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Is there anyone else who wishes to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10. Member, you have the floor.

NATIONAL VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY GRANTS— NEED FOR PROPER OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Robert King: Yes, good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

We have heard many things today about how the current administration is doing great things for the people of this Island as it relates to pension reform, giving persons more money and essentially making life much better for those vulnerable, underserved and in need. Although that is true, it is only partly true because it doesn't speak to the whole issue. It is only giving you a microscopic view of the bigger picture and the actual context of how well things are in this country. If we only focused on those particular things, one would think that things are humming along nicely. Economically we are doing well. The money trees are continuing to grow fruit and be picked, you know, by the bushel for the people in the community.

However, that is not the case. We know that it is not the case when we see the increase in gun crimes and murder rates in this country. Talk to the families of young persons who have had to bury their children over the past five years. We have seen a steady increase—tripled the number of deaths in 2024 as over 2023.

When we came to the House today, it was suggested that the Violence Reduction Strategy is working. That persons who are on the Violence Reduction Team are achieving the mandate of reducing violent crime and the deaths and trauma and hurt that this community is experiencing. Those are the words that are being said by Members of this Honourable House and the Minister responsible.

However, the words stated are not borne out by the facts. The facts tell a completely different story. We hear that the Government is giving $540,000 to sports clubs, to community partners who are involved in providing services to at-risk youth and those to prevent and intervene to address the risks associated with antisocial, criminal gang behaviour and divert them on a positive path. And what we also hear is that there is no strategic plan. Nothing but timelines. There was no RFP process which spoke to data collection and success performance measures for those clubs.

So, essentially, money is being allocated. And we say it should be. However, there should be performance measures that need to be achieved to ensure that funding is used appropriately because $540,000 will go like that, if you don't actually have a plan for implementation, a dedicated team, resource allocation, proper budgets for the achievement of the stated goals. What we have is promises and statements made about what we are going to do. But what we don't have is a clear plan and pathway to make that happen.

I also found it interesting that we did not hear from Dr. Bean. His name wasn't mentioned. The Honourable MP Bean. His name wasn't mentioned as being somebody critical to the success of the Violence Reduction Team. Understanding the great work, albeit, without sharing the specifics of that work because we don't actually know what the numbers are, because that hasn't been provided to us.

The system is not working. We can fool ourselves and lull ourselves into a false sense of security and say that it is. It is not borne out by the facts. Putting money toward these initiatives, absolutely. We say that must be done. But there must be proper oversight and there must be accountability to make sure that monies allocated are achieving the aims that we have set to preserve life, not to pay for funerals.

What is the strategic plan that connects all of the community partners together?

Who sits on the board?

Who are the specific people who are going to be working together?

I found it interesting that the Minister couldn't name the four people who were involved. There was nothing substantive in what he was saying about how the Violence Reduction Team operated, who was involved. There was nothing substantive other than they meet, they are working, you know . . . in the future. Just broad strokes for a critical issue that is claiming lives at an alarming rate for a country of this size.

It demands the respect and attention for the families who have suffered. What are they saying about what this Government is doing to protect their children? We are having marches. We are having expressions of condolences from this House to the people who are hurting in this community. And the numbers are rising.

So, how can we say that we are doing enough for the community when the numbers simply do not add up? More funerals. More people getting hurt. But we are asked to listen to the words and ignore the evidence when we look in the papers, when we talk to families in the community. All of our constituents, nobody owns them, all of our constituents, all of the people in this Island are essentially a family. Some might say a bit dysfunctional as evidenced by what happens in here but we're firmly family nevertheless.

What I'm suggesting is if we are taking this problem seriously, we're not. We're saying that we are. It's like a person who says, you know, I seriously want to lose some weight but I'm going to continue to eat Twinkies at, you know, two o'clock in the morning. And I'm going to wash it down with a Lucozade because it tastes nice and, you know, I'm hoping I'm going to be energised in the morning. Steps on the scale a month later, Oh, I put on 10 pounds. Really wanted to lose weight but the approach to weight loss—

Pastor Leroy Bean: Point of order.

Mr. Robert King: —is not going to achieve that.

Pastor Leroy Bean: I believe this Honourable Member is misleading—

The Deputy Speaker: Just a minute, Member. Just a minute.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, he was here. Sit down. Yes.

Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Pastor Leroy Bean: I believe he is misleading the House, not only with some of the information and rhetoric that he has given. First of all, we do, in National Security, collect data. And data would form the matrix that we need to actually declare our success. He's talking about . . . he mentioned about how many of the young people are dying. The truth of the matter is that when we look at the very concept of gang violence, we have truly not addressed where a lot of this here has come from. I don't believe, you know, according to what he is saying, that gang violence is by design. And when I say "design," we need to go back—

An Hon. Member: Is this a motion to adjourn?

The Deputy Speaker: It is a point of order, and I am getting ready to ask him if he can round out what he's saying.

Pastor Leroy Bean: Okay. Like I said, I believe—

The Deputy Speaker: First time he has come to his feet on the point of order.

Pastor Leroy Bean: I believe that he is misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: That was helpful because we are talking about a holistic and a collaborative approach. What we're talking about is prevention and intervention to address the root causes and we need intervention programmes and services so that persons—

Pastor Leroy Bean: Point of order.

Mr. Robert King: —can exit the system.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point-of-order him again.

Mr. Robert King: For what? So anyhow—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, yes, no worries. So, the point—

The Deputy Speaker: Can you sit down? There is a point of order on the floor.

Member King, sit down, there's a point of order.

Pastor Leroy Bean: I believe, again—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Pastor Leroy Bean: —he is misleading the House.

What he is saying is not factual information. And I believe that he is misleading the House.

Mr. Robert King: Which word?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Member.

Pastor Leroy Bean: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: You're fine.

Member King.

Mr. Robert King: I was point-of-ordered for not giving factual information. Which part is not factual?

An Hon. Member: All of it.

Mr. Robert King: All of it?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, let me give you some facts, to the MP from constituency 10. When we had had a workshop—

The Deputy Speaker: He is misleading the House, you are saying? Yes. Okay.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: He is definitely misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: All right.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: But the facts are that we have combined many an organisation to come together to take a holistic approach in our approach to trying to combat violence in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Minister.
Member.

Mr. Robert King: The numbers speak for themselves. An increase in violent crimes. Overall, crime trends are down, but violence and murders, those are up. So, it says that what we're doing is not achieving the aim that the Violence Reduction Team has set as a goal to preserve life.

Pastor Leroy Bean: Point of order.

Mr. Robert King: We are not meeting the targets.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear . . . you said point of order, did you not?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Pastor Leroy Bean: Yes. I believe again he is misleading the House.

You know, one thing that the Minister has constantly . . . I have heard him constantly say from the House, it is a collaborated effort with all.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Pastor Leroy Bean: You know. And I believe that he is misleading House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Member.

Member King, continue.

Mr. Robert King: I believe that we are going off beliefs and feelings as opposed to not looking at what the facts are saying.

Pastor Leroy Bean: Point of order.

Mr. Robert King: So, what we're saying—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, he can say what he thinks. That doesn't make it fact.

So, continue, Member King.

Pastor Leroy Bean: I've never seen him out doing anything like this. Talking about collaborating.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Well,—

The Deputy Speaker: It's an opinion. It's not a fact.

Mr. Robert King: Actually, that's not true because you were at the Family Forum there last Thursday which I was present for.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Well, yes, he did. He did, because I acknowledged him.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Please speak to the Chair.

Mr. Robert King: So that was a point of order that was not a factual statement. He is misleading the House. I mean this—

Pastor Leroy Bean: You have never been to the hospital or anything.

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Robert King: Okay—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, Member. Continue to speak—

Mr. Robert King: I remember too . . . what the Honourable Member is suggesting is impossible for me to actually have been there because much of the work happens on an extremely confidential basis. So, I would

not, and nobody else would have been able to go to the hospital and do the specific and particular work that this Honourable Member does.

So, for him to suggest that I wasn't at the hospital, none of you would have been able to be at the hospital because of the specific and particular work that the Honourable Member does. So, what he is suggesting is quite ridiculous because none of us would be able to be in the position that he is, in his paid position as a consultant for the specific role that he occupies.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Point of order, Madam [Deputy Speaker]. Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, your point of order, Member?

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motives and Misleading]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Now the Honourable Member is imputing improper motives on the Member by referencing the fact of his profession. But also, he is misleading the House. Because any Member connected with the community in the way in which the Honourable Member Bean and the Honourable Minister Weeks are connected, and others [who] are connected with the community would get wind of things that are happening immediately. And if they were part of the community they would know how to reach out to provide the type of comfort. That's the lack of connectivity that is evident—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Member, for your point of order.

Yes, Member, continue.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, I have a point of order of a fact.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. A point of information, you mean?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Information of fact.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you accept his point of information, Member.

Member King, do you accept his point of information?

Mr. Robert King: That would be a no. No, I don't.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Continue, Member.

Mr. Robert King: So—

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Well, a point of order then, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me hear your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: The Member has said that murder is on the rise.

Mr. Robert King: It is.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: By gangs, gang violence is on the rise.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Last year, based on gang violence, it was four people who were murdered through gang activity. This year two people have been murdered through gang activity.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

An Hon. Member: It's only half a year.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Well, regardless of half a year or not.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Member, continue.

Mr. Robert King: So, what the Honourable Minister is saying is that—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Robert King: Well, you, like you—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: So . . . okay, all right. All right.

So, the point is definitely more needs to be done. We need to be strategic in our planning and execution to preserve life.

What we have is money that is being allocated without the requisite oversight and accountability that is required to ensure that we are meeting our targets. I didn't hear anything about programmes that were occurring in the primary schools, in the middle schools, in the Department of Corrections, the Department of Child and Family Services, specifically.

Pastor Leroy Bean: Point of order.

Mr. Robert King: I didn't hear any of those things.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

Pastor Leroy Bean: We do have programmes within the primary school.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Is this a point of information?

Pastor Leroy Bean: I guess a point of information.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, does he—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: —does he . . . do you—

Pastor Leroy Bean: We do have—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Continue, Member.

Pastor Leroy Bean: —programmes and it's been spoken by the Minister on a few occasions. The I AM programme and—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hold on one second.

Member, did you accept his point of information?

Mr. Robert King: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. So, Member, take your seat. Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Point of order. Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: What the Member said was that there are no programmes. And it is misleading the House.

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

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: That is misleading the House.

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

[Inaudible interjections]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Let me just—

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I am not finished!

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

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: Let me speak.

Okay. Let me just say this. There are different comments that are being made. And before the Minister even got a chance to actually put his point of order on the floor, someone else is rising on a point of order. I need to hear his point of order clearly before I can hear yours. So, when we are going back and forth, let's respect—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, the process.

Let me hear your point of order, then I will hear yours.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The point of order is simply that there are programmes currently in our primary schools to address the violence that we're dealing with.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Members are misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Which Member is that?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Minister of National Security.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. That's who—

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

The Shadow Minister did not say there were no programmes. He said he did not *hear* of any programmes. But he did not say—

[General uproar]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —the programmes did not exist.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He did not say that they did not exist.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, come on.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Member from constituency 10, you may continue.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: You have three minutes.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, I will use them wisely.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

[Laughter]

Mr. Robert King: All right. So, what we are going to say—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: What we will accept is that more needs to be done to preserve life in this community, hold those persons who would cause harm or take lives unlawfully that they be held to account.

So, we recognise that guns and drugs are a problem in this community, for persons in the community, and persons who are at Westgate. So then, wouldn't it suggest that understanding that the two ways that drugs and guns come into the country are through the sky and via the sea? Wouldn't it make sense then to fix the HM Customs and Immigration Dock in St. George's instead of making Sandys Dock and Mangrove Bay the priority instead of protecting our borders?

Wouldn't that make sense, if we were serious about protecting this community and preserving life in this community,—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Point of order.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Robert King: —that we are not going to worry about sorting out some docks and hangout spots?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, no.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise . . . do you yield? Because you got up with a point of order first, Member from [constituency] 26.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I won't yield, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: And it may be the same point of order from the Honourable Member.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. What has Sandys Dock got to do with—

An Hon. Member: That's a question, not a point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Sit down.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Hang on.

The Minister is not responsible for that.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I understand. Thank you.

The Minister is not responsible. He is misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you, Member.

Did he cover the same point of order that you had, Minister?

Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, no.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Respectfully, my point of order is that the Honourable Member from across the aisle is clearly misleading the House because when the Member will stand up and say that we are misguided in our approach, what he is missing is that we come to this place, Madam Deputy Speaker, to serve the people.

So, I think that the Honourable Member is misleading the House in his commentary.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Member, from [constituency] 10, continue.

[Crosstalk]

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

HM Customs comes under the remit of National Security. It is a fact. We had a Budget Debate. No mention was made of monies allocated for dock repair of HM Customs, which goes to the point that MP Tyrrell, the [Government] Whip, was talking about, *what is the significance of Sandys Dock and Mangrove Bay?* Monies were allocated for fishing spots and hangout spots and not—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Misleading the House.

Mr. Robert King: —a dock that protects all the security.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I have a point of order.

Mr. Robert King: That is what the issue is.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Point of order!

He is misleading the House when it comes to repair of the dock—

[Timer chimes]

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: That's it.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: We cleared that up last year,—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: —last week.

An Hon. Member: That's your time, Neville. That's your time.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 15. Member, you have the floor.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: He just yielded to you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I will yield to him.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Member from constituency 2.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I'll go next.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

CUP MATCH, SPIRIT OF

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I'm happy to yield to the Minister, but he was a little slow jumping up and I didn't want you to hit the gavel, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But I will let you know that the [Cup Match] Extravaganza in St. George's has been cancelled for anybody out there planning to come to St. George's and join in the festivities. I want to say thank you to the Mayor and the Corporation for St. George's for every year having a Cup Match Extravaganza. And when it is in St. George's it is particularly special and exciting. And I am sure they will find an alternative date. It is not for me to suggest, but next week when we select the winning team there, just before that would be wonderful. Or even a couple of days afterward would be just as well, or during the week whenever they decide.

I just want to take the opportunity in the spirit of . . . just to say in the spirit of one of my former constituents who sits in this House, that I am in the mood, too. I am in the mood to celebrate this wonderful spirit as we get ready to recess for some six weeks to take in . . . that you can start that spirit with some good weather tomorrow in St. David's with the County Games which first took place, I believe, I stand to be corrected, in 1902. They played for the Tucker's Town Cup. And for those who don't know, I am talking about Eastern County. And teams that represent St. David's of which you are fine representative, they represent Cleveland County of which I think there are at least two supporters in the House—three, maybe four in the House. They represent the mighty Flatts Victoria, who are playing tomorrow with about six guest players.

I remember my good friend, [Leon] "Spider" Blakeney, played for Flatts. One of the youngest Colts ever, a great cricketer. The first player ever to play for two counties because he met a young lady who lived in Bailey's Bay and he felt the only way in which he could look after that interest was to go play for Bailey's Bay and he told me the story himself. But grudges are held and he—

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —some 50 years later was delivering flowers for Gardine's when she first had her

florist [shop] and he says he went up on Fielding's Lane and Sluggo's, grandmama looked down in the truck and saw him there. When the guy went up to the door to ask where this house was and she said, *I won't be telling you with that traitor Spider Blakeney in your car.*

The County Games hold their traditions close and they are all about family. If you are from Bailey's Bay and you are a Trott, or you are a King, or you are an Outerbridge or, you know. County means something to you if you are in St. David's and you are a Pitcher, or you are a Lamb, or even a Foggo. County means something to you. And chances are you are related.

If you are from Flatts and you are a Wainwright, and you are Woolridge. County means something to you. Hurdle's have been known to play for the mighty Flatts. And other folks have been known to play for the . . . but the Cup is the Tucker's Town Cup.

People say, *Why do you talk about golf?* Because golf was where County Games first started. If you ever drive along Paynter's Road on South Road, where South Road and Paynter's Road meet, there is a little intersection there. Stop. Look across the street and you will see the steps from the church that still existed when I first came to Tucker's Town to work, back from university in 1980. The church was there. It housed workers, predominately workers from overseas in Portugal. It was still there in 1980. It was later demolished. Now a mansion sits there but the game was played below that church. Below St. Philip Church. It was played on the 12th fairway of Mid Ocean Club.

You go up a little further into Tucker's Town where I worked for many years. I loved . . . My best job ever was working for Bermuda Properties at Castle Harbour. I loved it dearly. But we used to play over a graveyard not knowing all the history of Tucker's Town. Not knowing much of the history of Tucker's Town then.

I have come to appreciate that the driving range that forms the Rosewood [at] Tucker's Point today hits over a graveyard where many of those families, the Lambert families and the Smith families and the Talbot families were relocated away from Tucker's Town to make way for two golf courses that came, one in 1922 and one in 1931. And between that period, between 1922 when Mid Ocean was built, and 1931, seven golf courses were built up in this golf course. More per square mile than any place in the world. And that still exists today. And in the Island of St. George's we had three 9-hole golf courses, more per square mile than anywhere in the world. A hundred years ago.

So, you ask why I speak about golf, because golf was a major part of our economic engine. And remains a great part of our economic engine. And the connection between golf and cricket are intertwined. The world one-armed champion came from Tucker's Town, played County Games. Anyone know his name?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: His name was Quinn Talbot.

I want to say something hurt me this week. I was in the Garden Market. The St. George's Esso has been rebranded and it has a Garden Market there. Many people shop. A lady stopped me and said, *Mr. Swan, my mother cleans for Mr. Talbot . . .* and I sent a shout out to Dr. Talbot, his wife, and Mr. Quinn Talbot, the former world . . . multiple one-armed champion. And she said, *Mr. Talbot was robbed walking along Suffering Lane.* A couple of guys came up in a vehicle and said to him . . . and I am not making any fun of it, but it had a little chuckle. *I need you to take off your watch!* And he said, *With which hand?* He has only got one arm. And they forcibly took his hand . . . took it off his arm. He had to go to the hospital. Mr. Talbot is having difficulty, health challenges, but he is a strong man.

And I am here to say today, it bothered me. Why? Because when the young people or those persons out there engaging in that type of activity can show that little respect and compassion for our seniors, let it be an alarm bell that we need to really drill down into that mind-set socially. And I am calling on communities, families. You know, I have heard the saying, *If you know something, say something.* Well, I don't need you to say something publicly, folks, families, communities. I need you to say something directly because you have the ability to tell somebody, *That ain't right!*

This year I made it my point, getting my health and strength back, that I am going to start finding some champions. Some more champions. But I am going in the hood to find them. Right? And I have celebrated today the young lady who I taught from eight, who won the bronze [medal] today. Honourable Tyrrell celebrated a youngster I taught at five. I saw another youngster I taught at eleven who came to me from Cornell Bean, Kenny Leseur. I have seen a few others in the last 10 years hanging around Port Royal coaching that have gone on. In order for us to get to the root of our social problems we have got to get to the root of people.

I point-of-ordered the Honourable Member. I like Member King coming in the House. I do. I [will] tell you why. He comes early. He stays to the end. And whether you like it or not, he causes us to stand up. There were many times that Opposition was not even here on the motion to adjourn! And since that young Member has been there (right?), whether you agree with him or not, he has caused us to have to address things, and we point-of-order him to (as my uncle says) get your paper straight. And maybe he will get his paper straight—

[Inaudible interjections and desk thumping]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Right?

I ain't got to go nowhere! I will never go where I am never wanted!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And you trampled on me.

Craig talks about the party that he brought into power. Let me tell you. You left me by the roadside. And you did not just run over me; you reversed your car back and went back over me. That was one of the biggest days. I do not want to use up my time talking about that nonsense. They can research it.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: It was one of the biggest tragedies. You talk about all the things that we have done which are good that you want to negate. But, hey! Took a lot of money to . . .

A mind-set that will cause a former Government on the eve of the election to go out and make a deal that cost the incumbent Government $250 million—that is what they did, you know. I am talking about Morgan's Point. We are still paying for it. And when you drill down on Morgan's Point, you will find decisions that were made that benefitted persons who are not the people, and the due diligence that you did not provide left this Government holding that bag.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Now let me get back to—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —where I wanted to start.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: This season I talked about the significance of County [Games]. And I believe everybody in there would agree that County is about fairness, and so is Cup Match. You know, when County and Cup Match were started right within a year of each other nearly 125 years ago, it would have been people like my great grandmother who would have been celebrating her father who would have been born in 1834. When you start looking at that, there are a lot of young Bermudians running around today with great-grandparents still alive. I did not know my great-grandmother Harriet Ratteray, but her father Edward George Stanley Ratteray, born in 1835 the year after emancipation, would have been someone near and dear to her. Her peers in Somerset, your peers, Madam Deputy Speaker, in St. George's would have seen it necessary to celebrate their forefathers.

And while commercially we see the blue bags being sold, we see the advertisement all around, we see us talking about our blue and blue, our red and blue, our yellow and blue . . . I am a White Hills Somerset Bridge. We won County last week. Hopefully we can hang on to it for the end of the year.

You know, we talk about our different colours, but it is important to know that those holidays that we will celebrate in another couple of weeks were not given to us by the persons who oppressed and still make money. There is more money going to be in circulation over the Cup Match period than Christmas. And when I tell persons how significant economically Cup Match is for many people, it does not take a rocket scientist if our country is divided economically into the haves and have-nots or who are in the positions of economic power and who are not. And that is the tragedy of where we are in Bermuda.

That is the tragedy of us not looking truthfully at some of the disparities that have been carried on from that legacy that my great-grandmother Harriet Babe Ratteray and my great-grandfather Jacob Swan and as such my great-grandmother Emily Burrows-Hall would have experienced.

It is important that we start drilling down. And I mentioned how I decided to go (and to go young!) to the nine-year-olds because I have seen what proper coaching of a five-year-old would do, and, thankfully, to be still around to see them starting to mature. When you give proper foundation . . . When you have young people who would rob an eighty-year-old, something is missing in their foundation! A Government cannot fix that. A community can. Families can. And so, in the spirit of if you know something, say something, it is time to start being real close enough to us.

And let me tell you this, when I am teaching those young people, and I catch them together (and children will be children) and when they start saying things, and I put them in different circumstances that they . . . I have to check them right there and then. *That is not right. You need to act a little bit more responsible, respectful*. That is important. And tell them why. And compliment when they are doing things right. And show them the right way to do something. Those are the fundamentals of golf.

Fixing problems is not complicated when you can go to the fundamentals, but if you let something grow up . . . You know, the late Gerald James used to tell me when he was in the army and police service: *You know, when you are in the army, you do not start off on your right foot. If you start off on your right foot, you are wrong the whole way around. It is, what? Left, right, left.* He said, *If you let these lots start off on the wrong foot . . .* And that is the problem. So, we have got to get back to fundamentals. We have got to get strickly to fundamentals and cause families and communities to take ownership. And that goes down to . . . We cannot be nannies to a society. We have got to enforce what those fundamentals are.

Growing up, no matter how rambunctious you would have been (and I was), honesty was a community imperative! Respect for elders was a community imperative!

You know, when I went to other communities, when I went to Palm Beach Junior College, my golf coach was not a celebrated golfer. He was a retired probation officer. I said, *The Good Lord could have sent*

me to any college in the world in 1976, but he sent me to Palm Beach where all the money was, where all the great golfers hung out and lived. And he put a probation officer as my coach, my first coach. Not the best golfer. That probation officer arranged for me to take lessons from the same person that was teaching JoAnne Carner, the champion of America. The latest golf coach was the women's amateur champion. I learned from them. But the first thing he told me, he said: *First you are a person. You have got to be true to God. Second, you have to be true to your family. And long before you can represent me, you have got to be a good student. And when you get those things right, then you can come. And I want you to be the best student athlete you can be.* We have got to have these types of conversations, not anything less.

When you can get the fundamentals right, you do not know what a person is going to turn out to be. [At] eleven years old, my goal was to be the goal keeper for Chelsea Football Club. And I was committed to it. At 22 I was the first Bermudian member of the PGA European Tour, whose office was in Knightsbridge where Chelsea is from. The Lord had something different playing for me. He has got something different playing for every child in this country. We have got to give them the fundamentals of life. And we have got to not be afraid to tell their parents, *You are getting it wrong!*

I am here to say in the spirit of Cup Match that . . . I am not going to make any predictions outside of a St. George's victory.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And I am praying for a St. George's victory—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —but I am wishing for the spirit of Cup Match and the spirit of our ancestors because I am sure if they are able to speak through their families more than a Cup Match win, they would want us to get our young people right. And I feel we need to go down.

When I came back to Bermuda in 1980, I thought you had to start working with those young golfers, talented people at eight. So, I used to go to primary schools and teach them at eight years old, [at] Francis Patton and the like. And I had great success from Tucker's Town. But my knowledge today tells me having taught young Oliver and his mother that the key is families. We need to cause more families to come together, and we need to go younger.

Coming better than him who Honourable Tyrrell mentioned, is his sister who listened to everything I taught. And when she was like four years old, picked up a club, and could repeat everything in motion. We need to get younger and get that right. We owe it to this country. It is about fundamentals. Jim Woolridge said, *A good carpenter can build a barn, but any jackass can knock them down.* And what we need to do is to get back to fundamentals.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 14 I believe it is. Member, you have the floor.

RECOGNISING THE OBLIGATION AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This afternoon I rise in deep reflection and also acknowledgement for the work that this Government has done on behalf of the people of Bermuda. And I am reflective of our requirement as leaders and as legislators. And that requirement is to make life better for the people of Bermuda and to do what they have given to us by way of a convincing mandate at the polls to deliver to them and for them consistently.

Today we have heard of our success by way of passing the minimum wage through the Minister of Economy and Labour. We have also discussed the contributory pension increases, which also further evidenced that commitment and the actions that we are committed to do on behalf of the people of Bermuda not just in words but also in delivery, not just in delivery that is suspended or delayed but also immediate that we can point to and show how we are working on their behalf.

I remember when I was on the campaign trail, and I was knocking on doors and engaging with seniors and hearing their stories about not being able to make ends meet or being able to see their pension stretch far enough. And we see other instances where there are increases. And they just felt that they were out of step and were happy to know that they would be considered and were also happy with the successive increases that this PLP Government has done on their behalf year after year from being in office in 2017.

This is a reminder of our *why*, of our duty to serve, to act on behalf of the people. It also evidences a moral commitment and also evidences where we are and what we believe to be a priority in this administration, in this Government.

And so, when I hear the comments that would suggest that perhaps, you know, *More,* you know, *Not enough*, but the absence of doing anything at all, we want to be able to evidence through action, and so not doing enough or waiting until it is perfect is not the option either. And so, I think people of Bermuda are pleased to know that we are doing everything that we can. And it is also going to require an acceptance as

well as a commitment from those in the community to meet the Government half way in some instances.

As the Minister responsible for cost of living, these are the types of things that we are navigating and refining as we are seeking to deliver a cost-of-living strategy that builds on the survey that we have placed out into the public. It builds on the discussions with industry and builds on what we know to be true but also invites and confirms the industry-specific commitments that they have made to meet this need on behalf of those whom we all serve.

And so similarly, in reflection of our role and then also going back to how we each got here in this House or at least on the PLP side in terms of from 2017, I am reflective of where I was at that time having just returned to Bermuda having worked in other Caribbean islands at the time, serving other Caribbean leaders and made at that time a decision to no longer support in that way. And so, I said, *I am going to come back to Bermuda and just take a little desk job, and I will be fine*—insofar as what my service would look like.

And I remember being in the basement of a location working and engaging with my private sector clients, and there was a discussion around this large crowd that was outside. And people could not figure out what was happening because most of the people who were my colleagues were foreigners, and so they were asking questions. And I remember taking out my phone and reaching out to the then Opposition Leader and saying: *What is happening? What is happening outside?* And he responded and shared about how the people were tired of the fact that they were not heard. They were tired that the things that they were asking for were not being delivered. And they felt as though their message and the things that they would have communicated to their representatives were not being delivered on. And I remembered thinking: *Do not get involved. Stay where you are. You have made a decision to be in the private sector.*

Then having been invited in 2017 to support the campaign, I remember the decision that I made then, which was to decide to take unpaid leave and serve in a capacity to support my country or to maintain my corporate role and see that there was a them-[problem] or a community-problem or a politician-problem, not a problem that I as a member of the community with the ability to impact and support could get involved in. And so, after discussion and much thought, I then, Madam Deputy Speaker, decided to support the 2017 campaign [of] which we are seeing eight years later the fruits of our labour and our successes.

And so it is that duty that I feel that remains with me today, not recognising that there would be a full circle moment for me to then be in Parliament. If they had paid me probably a lot of money, I would have said: *Nope. It wouldn't be for me.* But I stand here recognising the obligation and our moral responsibility to serve our community in whichever capacity that we can, deliver on the things that people ask for us to deliver on, and show that we are listening and that we are their representatives here in the House and in the policies that we seek to legislate and advance.

Most recently having attended my first CARICOM meeting as a Minister, [I had] another deeply reflective moment having an opportunity, now in a professional capacity or in a different capacity, interacting with former bosses and former people that I would have built relationships with over the years when I was consulting. And so, that for me was representative of the journey that you often cannot define or even predict but also representative of the fact that there is an unmistaken synergy between the islands and the things we are seeking to advance here. There are some things that they have done successfully that we are seeking to navigate through. They have . . . We are sharing . . .

We saw today even with the Minister of National Security how Turks and Caicos is coming and learning from us and our Regiment. And so, we are already evidencing the synergies that we have in the region. And so, you know the suggestion around questions or concerns that we will soon seek to have as part of a consultative document . . . But we are already evidencing it, and I think it is an expansion of that friendship, an extension of our acknowledgement of our history, an extension of us being culturally aligned and also the fact that our future and our history are also in step. And so, it is an opportunity to realign and reconnect with those CARICOM brothers and sisters and those islands, and learn from them, and lean into that shared history and destiny that we are all included in.

And so, on the eve of this Cup Match holiday, before this House rises, in the first instance wishing my team all the best in St. George's as we care to defend and also receive the Cup—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: And so, when we rise, I wish to wish everyone . . . Also, as we remember Mary Prince and the historic Emancipation Day, the legacies and the unfinished work of justice and equality and dignity of Bermudians that we are seeking to fight for each day . . . And so, I wish everyone a happy Cup Match, and I do wish St. George's in particular all the success.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 15. Member, you have the floor.

BOUND BY HISTORY, CARRIED BY COMMUNITY

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

You know, it almost brought tears to my eyes to listen to that speech from the Member from constituency 14. And I say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I believe that she was being very modest in her comments. And one of the first things that I saw this morning when I woke up and looked at my phone was a picture from exactly eight years ago today. And Madam Deputy Speaker, while you know the Member from constituency 14 will say that she was a part of that election campaign and she tells a story how she came to be at that place, I will tell you other than the Leader that we had at the Progressive Labour Party at that time, it was the now Member of constituency 14 who led that campaign.

And that brings me to the topic of my motion to adjourn this afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the topic is Bound by History, Carried by Community. And going along the lines of where I started and the Member from constituency 14, I am going to tie this back to some comments that I heard a moment ago from the Honourable Member from the other side.

It dawned on me at this time as the Member just gave her speech that she is the granddaughter of one Mr. "Pommy" Lightbourne. And I say that respectfully by using his nickname, but I will refer to him going forward as Mr. Lightbourne. And Mr. Lightbourne, [for] those of you know the history—and his granddaughter eloquently gave that history in previous sittings in this place—one of the professions that he had was a barber. Another one—he was an entertainer. But let me tell you the one that most people will know him for. He was a man of the community. And while his granddaughter sits next to me in this honourable place and we are bound by that history, we are carried by the community that he came from, the Dock Hill area. And that is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the Minister responsible for Public Works gets up in this place and says that this Government is going to put money and resources into fixing up Sandys Dock, this is where we tie it all in. We are bound by history but carried by community.

I take this role seriously, Madam Deputy Speaker. Whenever I come to this place, I remember the individuals who put me here. And while the Honourable Member from the other side would question decisions of the Government as to why we do this or why we do that, I will tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Progressive Labour Party and its members are carried by community.

If I take it back to eight years ago, it was a moment on that evening right here on this street, just a little bit down, Court Street, that we looked out and you would see the pictures and you would see the joy and relief and even the sweat [of] Honourable Member for [constituency] 14. And that is because a few years before that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the result was a little different. The Honourable Member from [constituency] 14 and myself and others may have been in different positions at the time, but in 2012, on a night that was a little cooler, the results were not what we saw in 2017. And we could have walked away, Madam Deputy Speaker. We could have buried our heads in the sand, but we were bound by history of what happened in 2012. We were bound by the struggle of the Progressive Labour Party in all of the years since 1963 leading up to that moment.

And Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure you know where I am going with this. What took us to 2017 (those of you at the time who were on a different side of the aisle) [is] we were carried by community, carried by the community. And when you went knocking on those doors, they told you, *Keep up the fight.* They told you, *We have your back.* And that brings us, Madam Deputy Speaker, to where we are today.

I just want to remind the Honourable Member from the other side that when decisions are made, it may not seem important to him, but when we walk on those hills, and we knock on those doors, and we have members from your constituency saying: *Thank you. I cannot wait to go down to Sandy's Dock with my grandchildren. I cannot wait to relive the days that I had growing up that Mr. Lightbourne would have known about and his granddaughter and other members of that family,* it is more than just a fishing spot, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want the Member from the other side to remember that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mm-hmm.

And as I go on, I am going to touch on some of the matters that we are bound by history but carried by community. And based on a Ministerial Statement that I gave earlier today, Madam Deputy Speaker, emancipation is the foundation of the season that we are moving into. We gather, and we party, and we revel based on the courage of those that came before us. We have to remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Cup Match is a living memory not just a cricket game. It is a two-day holiday rooted in celebration of deep historical meaning and reflection. This, Madam Deputy Speaker, is how we are bound by history but carried by community.

I know all of us today in this place have our colours on—some red, some blue, but that represents more than just a cricket club. That embodies family ties, international pride, Madam Deputy Speaker, and a connection to that place that reinforces who we are as Bermudians.

And we cannot overlook it, that when you talk about being bound by history and connected and carried by community, you have to take into account the role that our Black institutions have played and continue to play in Bermuda. If it were not for these Black institutions, we would not be celebrating Cup Match. We would not be celebrating Eastern Counties. And these institutions emerged, and they became important in this community as others in certain aspects and

certain places of this country felt it was better use of their time to fight to shut us out. And these clubs continue to carry that legacy.

Tomorrow in your neck of the woods, Madam Deputy Speaker, the 2025 series of the Eastern County Cricket Association gets started. As a former Minister of Tourism would say, *The voice of summer, the mighty Flatts* (an area which I once ran in) *The mighty Flatts pink and green will be trying to wrestle the Cup away from Bailey's Bay.* These three Saturdays that will follow, tomorrow, August 16 when them boys from Harris Bay come in—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And then, on the 30th of August when I think it is St. David's turn. That brings us together as a community in one heartbeat—three clubs, but one heartbeat—as families return home and generations reunite in their traditional colours to reunite and bring everyone together.

Just today on the street I saw Ms. Shaimeka Ingam. Everyone will know her as a quality dancer. [She has] been living overseas for a while. But it is that time of year; she is back. Family ties will always bring Bermudians back at this time of year.

And as you walk around the field . . . I know the Honourable Premier makes it a point on the first day of every Cup Match to go to every single camp. And that is part of tradition, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you have camps by the name of Camp Cartel, Wide Open, classics like CMB, No Apology, or Tea Flew. These just are not tents, Madam Deputy Speaker. These are what have become institutions of these Cup Match at East-ern County classics. Beyond the music, these camps' foundation serves as community safety nets. When you walk in, someone always has a spare chair for you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Someone always has a plate of food. Someone always has a charging cord. Some-one is always going to take care of your child if you want to go over and put some money down on the Crown and Anchor tent.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, goes back to the theme of where I started. We are bound by history but carried by community. And this is the unspoken truth and the unspoken strength of our community that takes us from resistance to recreation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I come to a close, I want to speak about our youth and the legacy. Even, I am sure, your grandchildren, Madam Deputy Speaker, wear their colours with pride. They may even sing the chants, something about St. George's boys forever. You know, Devil's Hole, they used to have the Devi's Hole choir. But these children run on the same fields as their grandparents. They pass down the culture. And this is not an accident, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is intentional passing of the torch, an intentional carrying of our history through our community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am reminded of the work that I do on a daily basis and why I make a joke that whenever my email goes off or my phone rings it is someone asking for something or complaining about something. I had a full circle moment yesterday. I remember as a child going to summer day camp, waking up and going all over this Island. It was a fun time. Just yesterday, I went up to Port Royal field, and the Government summer day camp had a Six-a-Side Tournament. I was there back at the field. I had stories. I had laughs. And I even had a game of cricket with a young man that said, *I could bowl you out.* You will see those pictures one day. I was not letting this ten-year-old bowl me out.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was also a camp counsellor at one time in my life, a sports specialist that came home. And just to see the joys of the faces of those young people 25 years ago and to see that same joy is still there not only in the faces of the campers but the counsellors as well, watching them just get into it and the pride that they would also take on through their students—that is the essence of our community carrying our history.

So, in what continues to be a divided world, it is this type of year, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Bermuda, through Cup Match, through Eastern Counties, reminds us what unity actually looks like. Rivals on the pitch, families under the tent—Bermuda continues to be tenacious. And while we go through these moments of struggle and maybe fight even in this place, it is important that we choose community because, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether we like it or not we are bound by history and carried by community.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. You have been on your feet a lot today, Member.

PLP GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA INEFFECTIVE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Here for a reason, not for a season, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, I did say to my wife this morning. I said, *Well, it could be an early day.* And that is when, you know, you have made a big mistake. So, here we are.

First of all, I would like to say thank you to everybody in this Chamber. I know I am one of many new MPs. And with the two-month summer break upon us, it gives us an opportunity to reflect. And so, I would like to extend my gratitude to certainly my colleagues who

have supported my development, to the parliamentary staff who have helped us also with the development, and to those on the other side of the aisle who have reached out and been collegial. And as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it can be quite collegial up here, not always and not enough, which I may get into.

I would like to say out to the general public, I want to wish them all a very happy Cup Match. Like I mentioned, we do have the two long, hot summer months ahead of us, so whatever you are doing, please do it safely. Wear sunscreen. Drink a lot of water. Stay in the shade. Act responsibly and so on and so forth. If you go to the stock market on Cup Match, maybe only take half your pay cheque. I find that is a good approach because you are not going to get the money back.

But I am also going to use this time personally to reflect. To reflect on what we have learned. And I am not going to say this "session" because I know that is not the correct word, but since we have been here since the election, both on how to continue to serve within my constituency, which is after all why we are here.

You mentioned I have been on my feet quite a bit, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not actually like to hear myself talk. But like I said, when there are things to be said, they need to be said. But [I] also kind of reflect upon the Government's agenda. And to be frank, I often get a question. People say: *What is it like? How are you finding it? How are you finding it, DeCouto?* And I have to say, *Well, I signed up for it, but frankly, in many areas it has been quite disappointing.*

You know, if I look back at the agenda that the Government has brought, while there have been many things that . . . for example, today we talked about the CPF or the social insurance increase. You know there have been things like that which, what we would say, are accretive. They are good. I am not seeing the important things getting done that are matching the concerns that we heard not just in the election but in the years leading up to the election.

We hear a lot about CARICOM. Can I tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, how many times someone wanted to talk to me about CARICOM on the doorstep other than to say, *What is going on with that? That does not make sense.*

We hear about the seniors. The seniors are important.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We hear about the seniors. But you know what we are not hearing about? What are the plans for the future of this country? Because what I heard a lot on the doorstep was, *I am worried about my grandchildren. I am worried about my children.* Or, *I am a young or mid-early professional. I am not sure I can stay here.* Madam Deputy Speaker. We are not seeing the things that are going to address those.

And I would put to you that some of the biggest items that have been brought by the Government were first of all the pay rise for the Members, passing of the budget, which primarily was a pay rise for the public service, which is fine, but we are not seeing or hearing about increased output or increased results from the Government that go along with that. We see a lot of travel and what I would call résumé polishing by Members of the Government. And we hear about CARICOM and independence. But you know what is ironic? Here we are, Madam Deputy Speaker. You are sitting in your chair in a rented office space while our own House of Parliament that we should all be proud of is up there on the hill yet to be renovated. I find that a bit odd. We are renovating Government House. Why can't we figure it out and get our parliament renovated?

I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, my reflection is that this Government does not take parliament seriously enough. We come up here, and we heard from my colleague, the former Premier, about questions. And I would put to you that we bring a lot of precise, important, targeted questions that are going to get information that is important for the public. And I find it odd that often the Ministers cannot answer those questions or answer them incorrectly. Okay? That is very unfortunate, frankly.

I talked about young Bermudians. Where is the absentee voting? Maybe in 2026? I do not know. We will see. We talked about CIT. We had the Honourable Premier, Finance Minister literally say with a straight face he could not tell us how many people were going to pay or could not tell us how they were going to allocate the CIT funds between the reserve fund. You know, Madam Deputy—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is tiring enough to listen to this drivel, but the Honourable Member cannot be putting words in the mouth.

It was very clearly stated; when the Bill comes, we will discuss it. I know that the Honourable Member does not understand how policy is made, but until policy is finalised, we are not going to bring it to the House.

We do not make policy by back-and-forth questions and discussions. We make policy by going through the consultative process, debating it in Cabinet, bringing it here so it comes as legislation and/or regulations, and it is discussed under the laws of the country.

The Honourable Member needs to withdraw that comment because I did not say that. I said we will not know until the companies pay. It is that simple.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I will reword my comment. In business, it is quite common to do all kinds of analyses and get pretty useful estimates before you have all the information. And frankly, for something so important for the future of this country, for the Government with a straight face to claim they cannot figure anything out until the payments actually get—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —out is frankly—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order. Point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —disappointing!

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order. We are not going to do this, Madam Deputy Speaker. Point of order.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House. That was not said. It is a plain and simple reality that you cannot give an accurate answer to parliament unless you get the information from the companies who must file and pay, unless the Honourable Member thinks that we must know every single person who has a various exemption under various things in privately held companies, and how many multinationals there are, and how many of them have holding companies, and all the rest. It is nonsense.

He is trying to make a political point, but he is being mischievous in my opinion.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Member.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, in my opinion if the kind of answers that this Government provided to this House on the corporate income tax were provided to me, by one of my staff members, or I provided those to my employer, I would probably not be looked upon too well. So, let me move on.

We know that we have a massive housing crisis. And when a well-respected organisation such as the Chamber of Commerce provides a detailed, thorough, and thoughtful analysis of the housing situation in Bermuda . . . And we will be honest. They are there to represent their interests, and we can acknowledge that. That does not mean that their analysis is not any good. Instead of engaging with it on the merits to solve the problem that we have, this Government chose to pick a fight with them. I do not understand it.

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And proposed to—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —Madam Deputy Speaker.

You see, the Honourable Member is not only misleading the House, but I have to believe now he is intentionally misleading this House. Right? Just for his edification, just recently—two weeks ago—the Chamber was invited to a housing meeting orchestrated by me, and they failed to turn up.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Continue.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I think the public is well aware of the Government's remarks with respect to the Chamber's—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House, and I am not going to let him get away with it again.

An Hon. Member: Again!

Hon. E. David Burt: Again! There is no issue or question in regard to things. The questions that came from the Chamber of Commerce were put in a press release without consultation with the Government first, requests, or asked for clarification, and the Government responded. Okay?

Now, just so we are clear, it started from this Honourable Member speaking about all types of things around the Department of Statistics. The response came that this Honourable Member is criticising the things from the Department of Statistics when clearly—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: —the Department of Statistics is getting things . . . Hold on. I am not finished yet, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not finished. Then the Honourable Member—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —just so we are clear, then the Honourable Member—

The Deputy Speaker: —Finish the answer—

Hon. E. David Burt: —The Chamber of Commerce took what was said—

The Deputy Speaker: —so I can answer his point of order.—

Hon. E. David Burt: (Thank you.)
—took what was said—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: —in a response to him on matters related to statistics and tied it into something else. So, it is not going to be correct for this Honourable Member to say anyone was picking a fight.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order, Member?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Honourable Premier is misleading the House.

I have never criticised the Department of Statistics. And in fact, I have taken great care in my remarks because I am well aware of the staff up there, how hard they work. And the Premier has said I criticised the Department of Statistics. I have criticised this Government's resourcing of that department and how this Government sits on and does not release information. Let me . . . So that is my point of order with respect to the Premier's comments.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. Did you want to continue?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to continue.

So, we have covered the CIT situation. We covered absentee voting. My notes are quite messy here.

Let's talk about National Heroes, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is not really my brief. And I do want to tread carefully because I know a committee of very well-meaning people got together, gave it their best shot to select a National Hero, and did not come up with one. And I do not want to second guess that, but what I cannot understand is why the Government cannot say, *You know? Why do we not check back next year?,* instead of waiting another 10 years because I could—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's that law!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh, that is the law. It is as if . . . You know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? Imagine if you had a group of people who could pass a law. They could change the law—

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: They could bring an amendment—

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: They could say . . . Imagine if you had a Government that was self-reflective and could say, *We did not quite get the outcome we were hoping for, and where we ended up does not make sense,* Madam Deputy Speaker. It is as if they are powerless. It is as if they are powerless to bring an amendment. I do not know. I am just saying, if I was in charge of that and I saw that that outcome—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —I would suggest that we revisit the topic. And I know many out there in the community probably share that as well.

Now, I have got two final maybe three final remarks. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Members on the other side are always desperate to know what I have to say.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I talked about my disappointment when I came up here. You know, there were many high points but also a lot of disappointment. Clearly, we come up here, and there are many topics we can reasonably disagree on. This is the point. In fact, as the Opposition, it is in fact our job to identify all the shortcomings and issues of things that the Government brings with the spirit of making them better. What I have found is often when we bring our comments, instead of the comments being addressed on the factual issue, the comments are being addressed with personalisations and illusions, and what is not ever addressed is the point that is brought. In fact, I will tell you what I found out, Madam Deputy—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker. I found out—

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I saw a caricature of myself on social media late last week. I showed it to a friend of mine, and they were quite upset. I said: *No, man. First of all, it is a good likeness, and it makes me look pretty good.* And I said, *Second of all, it tells you that they are worried and thinking about you.* And that means you

have found . . . You are living in their head, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Also, the fact that they have to resort to caricatures and personalisations means when you bring the material points that are important to the people of Bermuda, they have no answer to that. And they must resort—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: They must resort—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —to low personalisations.

As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of our realisations that we have is that we are competing with the rest of the world. We are competing with them for tourism. We are competing with them for international business. And we are competing with them for the future of our country, for our next generations. And while we hear a lot about the seniors who are also important stewards of our history (and we must respect and learn from them and take care of them), we are losing the competition for our next generation under the leadership of this current Government.

As we go into the next two months off, I hope that this Government can get to their desks, get to work, and come back in September with some legislation that is truly going to make a difference for everybody on this Island.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And some of the things I talked about we have already discussed. So that is what I look forward to. But for those listening in, stay cool. Use a little Limacol. Do not spend all your money. And enjoy the summer.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Member from constituency 17. Member, you have the floor.

PLP GOVERNMENT EXCELLENT STEWARDS OF THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good afternoon, again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

One would believe that over the eight years the Progressive Labour Party has sat up and twiddled its thumbs and has done nothing to advance the well-being of the people of Bermuda, that we report to this House on an ongoing basis, that we set out a Throne Speech and we got nothing accomplished, that we have done nothing meaningful to contribute to the well-being of society, but yet somehow are able to secure election victories. You see the two simply do not add up. You cannot be ineffective and then secure an election mandate on an ongoing basis.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Members that are chirping or screeching . . . And in Vance's case [it] is actually a screech (the Honourable Member) because a screech emanates from pain.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Okay? But when we look at it, this Progressive Labour Party has been extremely effective, and we have done a lot for the people of Bermuda. We come here on an ongoing basis. We go through laws that increase social protections. We have increased labour protections. We have lowered taxes on not just residents, but on businesses. We have advanced economic initiatives. We have been innovative in terms of legislation that we set out that created pathways for new industry in Bermuda. We expanded current industry in Bermuda. We get constant positive ratings that affirm the governance of this country, yet we sit here on an ongoing basis and have to listen to the rhetoric of the Opposition as though we have done nothing.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we do.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And I understand it. In order for them to obtain power, they have to discredit all that we do so that they can be viewed as a positive light. The reality is that the public is not buying what they are selling. And that is the reality. And that is why they were not successful in the last election.

An Hon. Member: Three recent elections.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jason Hayward: But the public was appreciative of us reducing payroll tax for 86 per cent of workers in Bermuda. We also reduced taxes for local businesses to support job creation. And we see job creation. Today we extended pension benefits for our seniors. Over $3,000 annually have been placed in the pockets of our seniors while we reduce taxes for those very same individuals. We have put money into affordable housing, and we will continue to put money into affordable housing to ensure that our people have access to accessible and affordable housing.

For those young persons who are looking to get on the property ladder, we introduced the Mortgage Guarantee Programme to ensure that people can have an uplift or a level of assistance to penetrate the market. For homeowners, we eliminated stamp duty.

Something I am proud of is the fact that we set out to increase or create a minimum wage. We were able to implement that. That has benefited thousands of workers in Bermuda. We are in a position now where we have advanced that to a different rate, and thousands of workers will benefit. And that is part of the hallmark of what we have been as a labour department in terms of ensuring that we extend labour protections.

The Honourable Member spoke about or gave the illusion that he has had a lacklustre experience in us progressing meaningful legislation, but the level of changes we have made to the Employment Act 2000 to progress the benefits of workers has been extremely progressive. When we start to talk about what our priorities are, our priorities have been demonstrated in our action and will continue to be demonstrated in the action of this Government.

We have increased the very same child day care allowance that they decreased. Who benefits from that? Each and every one of our constituents who qualify. No constituency has been left untouched with that benefit. That supports families. That supports our young people. We cannot sit up here and act like this Government has not done meaningful things that have had a positive impact on the lives of the people of Bermuda. Maybe when the Members speaks next he can be more specific as it pertains to the things that he is looking for us to accomplish, but please do not turn a blind eye to the work—

An Hon. Member: Point of information.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Not at all.

The Deputy Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Jason Hayward: You know what? I took great pride with the level of scholarships that have been issued to our students. We actually doubled scholarship funding. That scholarship funding puts our kids on pathways to success. It provides them bridges to opportunities. For some it provides hope where hope never existed, a means where some might not have had a means but also rewards some kids who have demonstrated excellence and provides them with a springboard into further education. We increased scholarship funding. They decreased scholarship funding.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jason Hayward: You tell me—

An Hon. Member: No point of order.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —where the priorities actually were. You know what? They cannot simply acknowledge that we have been excellent stewards of the economy. We have been fiscally responsible. We now have fiscal space to do things that they can only dream of. Not just providing scholarships for them, we also implemented College Promise so that no kid who has demonstrated a level of economic commitment has been left behind. In addition to College Promise we also ensured that there was additional funding placed at Bermuda College. So, for those persons who had needs they could go and get their funding as well. Many people are taking advantage of that funding on an annual basis.

The Community College is providing a bridge that the Bermudian people need to come back and succeed in our economy. And we see Bermudians succeeding in our economy.

We always talk about . . . hear chirping about emigration. But emigration has been a natural part of our economy. There has been no period of time when persons have not emigrated from Bermuda. There has been no point of time when persons have not emigrated. And when I was the Head of the Bermuda Trade Union Congress [BTUC], I was also complaining about emigration in Bermuda, when the Opposition was in Government. The reality of it is that this Government, instead of continuously complaining about it, says we are going to focus on the conditions that lead to emigration. And that is where our focus has and will be.

I am pleased that the Minister has now concluded the Cost of Living Summit. We have seen priority areas which need to be addressed. And we will work to address these areas. The entire community came together on this particular topic. And we will work with the community to ensure that we implement the policies that are required to make Bermuda a bit more affordable, ease some of the pressures associated with the cost of living. But also ensure that we create an inclusive and sustainable economy. We will continue to provide relief where we possibly can— whether that is freezing fuel prices, whether that is reducing taxes on electricity taxes, cell phone taxes, Government fees, where we possibly can. We have demonstrated budget after budget where we have made cuts. And we have had the ability to make those cuts by being excellent stewards of the economy.

I do not need the Opposition [to] affirm that we have been excellent stewards. The rating agencies reports make it abundantly clear. But then the numbers that they want to follow make it abundantly clear. I am pleased to be part of this Government. I support the ethos that this Government has to ensure that all boats rise when the tide rises. And we have been committed to doing that. Notwithstanding, we have to navigate the difficult terrain of a media who distorts our messaging, of an Opposition who can only find fault in whatever we do.

Some Hon. Members: Yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Say it again!

An Hon. Member: They only find fault.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We will continue to work hard on behalf of the people of Bermuda.

When we talk about our seniors; there is no shortage of things that we have done to support our seniors. I heard somebody say, *raise the age of retirement*. I sat on a committee with Age Concern, with members from the Bermuda College as well [and] with members from non-profit organisations as well as our business community. And we collectively concluded that Bermuda should progress our retirement age from the age of 65 because many seniors desire to work beyond 65. Whether it is mandatory or discretionary this Government will enact policies and put a framework in place that would allow people to remain in the workforce longer than 65 if they so desire.

There is a desire from our seniors to remain in the workforce. And if you look at the job numbers, we have more seniors within our workforce. More this year than we had a year before. And it is not all due to economic hardship. You see*, it is not all due to economic hardship.* Persons simply do not expire because they turn the age of 65. And then persons will harp and say it means young people cannot get those jobs.

There is no one-to-one relationship in terms of a senior leaving the workplace and a young person getting that job. That simply does not exist. We have seen these studies, it does not work. We have more jobs in our economy than able-bodied Bermudians. There is opportunity in our economy, and we continue to create more and more opportunity as jobs expand.

You see, the Opposition likes to squeal on the side, but they are not bold enough to say all of what they are saying on the side with the microphone so the people of Bermuda can have the benefit of their infinite wisdom. Of their divine interventions. Of their supreme knowledge.

The reality is we are the Government, and we will govern on behalf of the people. We will continue to expand social protections. We will continue to expand the economy. We will continue to ensure that we have economic growth and development that is sustainable. We will continue to create new industry. We will continue to expand on the industries that we do have. We will continue to create job opportunities for our young persons.

There is a lot of talk about an imbalance in our economy regarding international business and our local economy. People like that narrative. But speak about the narrative that over 50 per cent of the workers in international business are actually Bermudians who benefited from an expanding sector. There are hundreds of Bermudians at Southampton Princess. Hundreds. So, that establishment will create 700 jobs. And more Bermudians will benefit from the opportunities that exist.

We are creating opportunity. We are affording our young people opportunities. That is why we see that we have one of the lowest unemployment rates for our young people in decades . . . in decades. Somebody has to accept that the strategies we have are working and are effective.

You can turn a blind eye to the realities and continue to harp and chirp about doom and gloom. Or you can open up your eyes and see that we have tons of young people who are interns this summer who are taking advantage of summer programmes, who have now been able to benefit from scholarships extended, who will be the next wave of leaders in this country. There are a lot of positive things that are taking place.

The Honourable Member [Robert] King stands up and talks about the few Bermudians, the minority that need additional assistance to get back on the right track. And we are going to work to ensure that we provide assistance to those individuals. But I do not hear him [speak] about all of the positive things that our young people are doing.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

[Desk thumping]

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

I recognise the Member from constituency 9. Member you have the floor.

THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN THE STORY GOVERNMENT TELLS AND THE REALITY BERMUDIANS EXPERIENCE

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not know I could screech. But anyway, today, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have heard a few people stand up and talk about reflection. I would like to reflect as well. But my reflection will be on the widening gap between the story that this Government tells and the reality that Bermudians live every single day.

Many times, and today was no exception, we have heard them boast of reducing taxes for 86 per cent of residents; six, now seven pension increases for seniors versus the OBA's one (and not putting it in context, because there is a context); instituting Bermuda's first minimum wage (and, I am not saying that is a bad thing); increasing the child day care allowance broadening and improving the social safety net. They talk of an improved economy. They talk of entrepreneurship, of fairness and equity.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are not the stories that are being told and the experiences of our people around the kitchen tables. The recently tabled January 2025 *Factors Driving Emigration in Bermuda*

lays bare the truth. Bermudians are leaving. Not in dozens, not in hundreds, in thousands. They are not leaving for adventure or the novelty of living in another jurisdiction. They are leaving because they cannot afford to live here. They are leaving because they cannot afford to retire here. They are leaving because they do not see a future here for them. And in the past, and again to date, when the One Bermuda Alliance speaks on these of economics we are accused of doom and gloom.

An. Hon. Member: Dark clouds. Dark clouds.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Dark clouds, sometimes. I guess we were responsible for the rain today as well.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: But, as they say, as the saying goes, *the chickens come home to roost*. And Madam Deputy Speaker—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: —let us now turn to some facts. Not the Government's version, but the lived truths of Bermudians as captured in the aforementioned report *Factors Driving Emigration in Bermuda*. In-depth interviews with 20 Bermudians. Surveys—and that is 20 Bermudians who have emigrated. We have a survey of 105 Bermudians who have emigrated. And a survey of 416 Bermudians currently living here.

And with your leave, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to bring out some of the things that this report contains.

The Deputy Speaker: You are quoting from the report?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Could you state the title of the report again?

Mr. Vance Campbell: The report is *Factors Driving Emigration in Bermuda*—it was tabled.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: So, of the 20 Bermudians who have emigrated, who were interviewed in-depth, 13 had left within the past five years. We know who the Government was then. Four had emigrated between 5 and 10 years. And three had emigrated more than 10 years ago. So, we are not saying all of this has happened in the last eight years.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Mr. Vance Campbell: But, we do have a Government that has been . . . or a party who were the Government for 22 or have been the Government for 22 of the last 25 years.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: The reasons that they have provided for emigrating [are] the high cost of living, lack of affordability, ability to live beyond retirement. We have heard a lot of talk today, Madam [Deputy Speaker], about how well this Government has looked after our seniors. But yet, the reasons, one of the reasons for emigrating is the inability to live beyond retirement. They are leaving for more employment opportunities. Lack of employment growth in Bermuda. And educational reasons.

They are more satisfied (these are the 20 who were participating, who had participated in in-depth interviews) with their life overseas because of the better cost of living. The better health care. Employment opportunities are better. Education opportunities are better. And the quality of life is better. And they have more activities that they can participate in from a social perspective at their disposal.

The 105 Bermudians who have emigrated that were surveyed, their reasons for emigrating: cost of food and groceries; cost of housing and utilities; cost of health care and insurance; the difficulty of retiring in Bermuda; the lack of career opportunities. And they would return if those costs for food and groceries were lower, if there was improved management of Bermuda and the economy. These are not my words, this is what they said.

So, are they going to be accused of putting forth doom and gloom? This is their reality. That is why I started the way I did. About the gap between the story that this Government is telling and the realities that Bermudians are experiencing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: This is your report. And it is statistically sound. So, you cannot dismiss this.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Improve management of Bermuda and the economy. Lower cost of housing and utilities. Lower cost for health care and health insurance. More affordable retirement opportunities.

The responses by the 416 Bermudians who are still here are not different. Of those 416, 53 per cent may consider emigrating from Bermuda at some point in time in the future; 7 per cent stated that they had begun taking active steps to emigrate and are likely to be

in the next two years, and 39 per cent said they had no plans to emigrate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this report is not just data and numbers. The participants all were Bermudians. They are, or were, our neighbours. They are our friends. And they are our family members. They are leaving because they feel they have no choice. Their reasons are not abstract complaints. These are the lived realities of our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government claims to have done much, but the reality is the tax cuts that they have made are not felt as a result of the cost of groceries soaring. Pension increases are swallowed whole by rent and health care costs. Minimum wage . . . and it was increased, which is a good thing, but it still cannot meet the minimum cost of living in Bermuda.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker I would like to get some clarity from the Member.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, just a minute, Member.

Do you have a point of order,—

Mr. Christopher Famous: —Yes—

The Deputy Speaker: —a point of information?

Mr. Christopher Famous: —because earlier we heard—

The Deputy Speaker: —You have a point of order?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I do.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Earlier we heard from his compatriot—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order?

An Hon. Member: What is the point of order?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, tell me your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Christopher Famous: He is misleading because earlier we heard from his compatriot saying that the merger of the companies, that Honourable Member Scott Pearman is a shareholder of, is causing health care prices to go up. But how is it now the Government's fault?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Continue.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I never said it was the Government's fault.

An Hon. Member: Okay, that is great.

Mr. Vance Campbell: I never said it was the Government's fault.

An Hon. Member: We accept that point.

Mr. Vance Campbell: I am not saying that it is not either.

[Laughter]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Madam Deputy Speaker, all of these things that I have mentioned . . . this is the real Bermuda. Not the one in glossy press releases. Not the one in budget statements. But the one that Bermudians are leaving.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Bermudians are leaving.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government speaks of entrepreneurship, yet we have a shrinking and ageing population. Who will buy the goods? Who will build the businesses? Who will stay to invest in this country when the very people who love it—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: If the Honourable Member is going to make a statement around a shrinking population he must justify those things with the fact—

An Hon. Member: What is the point of order?

Hon. E. David Burt: Misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, Member.

Hon. E. David Burt: He can say ageing. He cannot say shrinking.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Who will invest in this country when the very people who love it the most are being pushed out?

An Hon. Member: The majority of people remain.

Mr. Vance Campbell: And while Bermudians leave, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government has approved more work permits than at any other time in our history.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh-oh!

How many . . . you want us to bring people into the country—

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —I mean really!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government claims they are protecting Bermudian jobs, but the reality reflects a different story.

Hon. E. David Burt: What reality?

Some Hon. Members: What reality?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: The Government claims that they are building a fairer Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: You will have your turn, Mr. Premier—

Hon. E. David Burt: All right—but Jesus.

Mr. Vance Campbell: But fairness does not look like this.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: At least make sense!

Mr. Vance Campbell: Bermudians are being priced out, pushed out, and left out.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, poor you, Vance. Poor you.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Poor you, Vance!

Mr. Vance Campbell: I am not ignorant.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Poor you. Poor you.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: In the last session, Madam Deputy Speaker, we heard about deep dives and taking deep dives into economic inequality in Bermuda, into pay disparities, into why Bermudians and non-Bermudians are being paid differently. Let us do a deep dive into pay scales based on gender and race. The hours non-Bermudians are working versus Bermudians. Institutionalised racism.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these are not new phenomena. They all existed prior to 1998. And as I mentioned earlier, the PLP has been the Government for 22 out of the last 27 years. And given what is in their constitution one would think that deep dives would have been done between 1998 and 2012. But no deep dives were done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: One would think—

Hon. E. David Burt: What are you talking about?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order, Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Jason Hayward: There are numerous reports that highlight inequalities in society and statistics where it clearly highlights that there are inequalities that exist within our economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for your point of order.

Continue, Member.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Madam Deputy Speaker, were those reports between 1998 and 2012? And why were they not acted upon?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order. The Member is misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Jason Hayward: There has been progressive work done to reduce inequalities within our society and make Bermuda a fairer place for all.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Member.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government may point to financial ratings and economic indicators, but these will not be their legacy. The legacy of this Premier, this Cabinet and the silent backbenchers, will be the emigration of our people and how they have failed Bermudians.

An Hon. Member: You are singing a whole new song.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Madam Deputy Speaker—

An Hon. Member: A whole new song, because we have a Hansard of you praising the Government—

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is what—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is what history will remember—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: And that was my job as a Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: That was my job as a Minister and a backbencher.

[Inaudible interjections and general uproar]

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Vance Campbell: And I did my job.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: And I anticipated that those on the other side would be saying what they are saying. And I anticipated that the Premier would jump to his feet and repeat—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: —and repeat all of what we have heard today, all of what I said they stand and repeat time after time.

They have nothing new, Madam Deputy Speaker.

They have failed Bermudians, especially seniors, who built this country (as they like to say) and now find themselves unable to afford to grow old here.

The middle class has been decimated.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Vance Campbell: They have failed our youth who see no path forward.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: They have failed our families.

You can try and dismiss what I am saying, but that is what this report is saying.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair!

Mr. Vance Campbell: That is what this report is saying!

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair, Member.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Your report—

The Deputy Speaker: Member!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Our people are telling you this.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: I do not want to sit you down. Speak to the Chair.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Vance Campbell: But this Government has failed and no amount of spin or press statements or financial ratings can change that. It is time we stop pretending. It is time we started acting for the people who still are here and those who we hope will one day return.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Member from constituency 29.

Member, you have the floor.

MP KING ENCOURAGED TO DO HIS HOMEWORK AND SPEAK ON FACTUAL INFORMATION

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I have to just shake my head.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I have listened to—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I have listened to—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All right take it easy. It is coming. It is coming. Just be patient. I am practicing.

But listen . . . I did not get on my feet tonight to respond to the doom, the gloom, the boogeyman and his cousin, and the boogeyman's auntie and all the other relatives that we heard from the Opposition today. All I am going to encourage members of the public to do is get a copy of Hansard and listen to the Honourable Minister Jason Hayward's speech. Because if he didn't outline the accomplishments of this Government over the past eight years, then no one will ever outline it. I am sure the Premier will have a little bit to say about that later too because the people of this country, if they were dissatisfied . . . if they believed in the doom and gloom, if they believed in the boogeyman, they would not have returned us for three successive elections.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Three successive elections.

An Hon. Member: That is reality.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The ratings of our country continue to be top class. Continue to be top class. And with regard to the Honourable Member Vance Campbell talking about all the permits we have issued.

An Hon. Member: Honourable Member.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member Vance Campbell, sorry, my mate . . . talking about the amount of permits that we have issued, but you have heard almost every Member of the Opposition say constantly on that side, *We have got to bring more people in this country to work.* But we do it and you slam us saying that we are bringing . . . I cannot believe that statement.

An Hon. Member: Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Another Hon. Member: You can't win.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You cannot win.

An Hon. Member: Welcome to Government.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So here we are bringing in people to the country, issuing work permits and we have issued too many. But for the last six months, *We have got to get moving and get people in this country.*

I remember the Honourable Member Ben Smith slamming the table, *We have got to get more people here!* Well, this week his colleague standing behind him said we are issuing too many!

Make up your mind!

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Vance Campbell: Point of order. Point of order Madam—I never said we are issuing too many. I said they are making statements that they are protecting the jobs of Bermudians and yet we have, under their—

Hon. E. David Burt: We are protecting the jobs of Bermudians.

Mr. Vance Campbell: —leadership, we have more work permits being issued than in the history of our country. That is the contradiction right there. Not what I said.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Member.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam [Deputy] Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Continue, Minister.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, point of order. That would be incorrect.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: That would be incorrect because they are the same ones saying that the population is at its lowest point.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Hon. E. David Burt: That ain't no one way or the other.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

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

You see, if anybody listens to this House regularly, they will see the forked tongue with which they speak.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They talk out of the left side this week and the right side next week.

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So here we are. We drive the—

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

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive; unparliamentary language]

Mr. Scott Pearman: To describe the Opposition as speaking with a forked tongue and out of both sides of the mouth is, of course, unparliamentary language and imputing improper motive. And the future Premier should know better.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, I am glad you are getting used to it.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In due course you will not say "future" anymore. So, the fact of the matter is they do not like that talk, but it is so true. See, we speak truth on this side.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me tell you why I got on my feet because what I am going to do is you will know by now everyone in this House knows that when I speak, I like to have factual information in front of me. And I will enjoy going through Hansard after today—and I will make you a promise that in my next motion to adjourn speech, I will address the bogeyman. I will address the doom and gloom by every one of them who spoke today. Every one of the Honourable Members on the other side, because I will tell you what. Hmm. No, I am not going to go there. I will save it.

An Hon. Member: And use one of Vance's statements.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, what I would like to emphasise tonight is this: I am going to implore the Honourable Member Opposite, the Honourable Member King, to turn over a new leaf when he comes back in September.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Turn over a new leaf. And I am going to look at him when I say it. And that new leaf is this: Honourable Member, when you come to this House and you get on your feet, have factual information in front of you. I have seen too many times—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —where you stand on your feet and you make false statements. And what in particular I did not like today, Madam Deputy Speaker, I did not like the fact that he talked about the gang violence in this country and the murders in this country. That is nothing to grandstand about or make statements in this House and be false about it.

An Hon. Member: That is not false.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member King was point-of-ordered five times by the Gang [Violence] Reduction Coordinator and four times by the Minister of National Security on false statements.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, we are not about not liking it. It was about false statements. And guys look, look . . . Members—

The Deputy Speaker: Please speak to the Chair.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes. Madam Deputy Speaker, all I am asking is that we do not use gangs and murders in this country. And I think every one of us has experienced someone we know, whether personally or a constituent, that has experienced a gang-related serious injury or murder. And all I am going to say to all Members in this House, and in particular the Shadow Minister of National Security, is if you want to talk about this subject, for God's sake do some homework.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Do some homework!

The Honourable Member King sits about 18 inches from the Gang Violence [Reduction]

Coordinator—18 inches. He sits about 22 feet from the Minister of National Security. You would think that he would reach out to them.

Look, I got it. We can do our political stuff all the time. We got it. But when it comes to murders in this country and the gang violence that could ruin this country . . . let me give you an example. The Honourable Member Michael Fahy . . . we have not had occasion to have breakfast or a glass of wine yet, but I tell you what, if he was to approach me and say, *Zane, listen. Can I get together with you and have a coffee and let us talk about housing for the country?* I would say absolutely. I would not turn him down. I would not.

So, all I am saying is that I would encourage the Honourable Member King—because we have all been affected by gang violence and murders . . . and all murders in this country. All I am doing is saying, listen, Honourable Member, if you want to get up and give somebody a little cocktail, that is fine. But do your homework and let it be on factual information. We can all take a good cocktail when we are ready in this House. We can all take it. But let it be on factual information. Do not continue to come here and have to be point-of-ordered constantly—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Right?—constantly because of false statements. That is all I ask on behalf of the people of this country. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 23—is it?

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, Madam.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Member, you have the floor

CUP MATCH—SPIRIT OF

Hon. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It has been an interesting [meeting] of the House this evening, today and this evening, dealing with a number of wider issues. And whilst I wish to echo all of the comments made by the Opposition Members, I do not wish to repeat them because I find repetition to be mind-numbing. They have made the points, and they have made them well. I have no doubt that we will have a much more theatrical performance after me but, in this regard, I would say that our points have been established.

I do want to make a point that the Honourable Minister for Community . . . ah, I have forgotten his portfolio title. The Honourable Minister who spoke—Honourable Member Owen Darrell, about Cup Match—Sports, Tourism and Transport, thank you. He was right to speak at length on the necessity for us to reflect on the horrors that were inflicted on the population of Bermuda. He is right to speak, to remind us, to ensure that we do not forget. It was wrong then. It is wrong now. It would be wrong in the future. And indeed, the horrors of human trafficking are still happening around the globe and they are wrong there.

Cup Match is the opportunity for us not just to enjoy ourselves but to remember what can happen when institutions are allowed to be corrupted. They lack the basic human civility and dignity. The institution of slavery was legal in this country. It is not hard for our institutions to make bad decisions. It requires the participation of all free and thinking people to constantly contribute to the narrative of our democracy, of our public discourse. To that end the necessity for voices is key. We must protect every voice. We must enable every voice to speak—even the voices with which we disagree. To that end, Cup Match is more and goes beyond the horrors of the past and enshrines in us a hope for tomorrow.

One of the hopes that it enshrines in us, one of the hopes it outlines is the hope that different people can meet on the field and express their differences, but that does not constitute a falling down of the whole society. Cup Match happens once a year, every year. And I always use it as an example of just how strong and noble Bermudians are that unlike other places in the world when we separate into two separate teams we do so with hearts—open hearts, open minds and strong backs. We do so well-knowing that the differences between us do not warrant violence. The differences between us do not warrant chaos and distress. The differences between us are necessary but they are not the worst thing in the world.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Cup Match, as we reflect on the horrors of the past and the hopes of the future, I hope that we are able to rest, take a break from the drama that is our day-to-day lives, that we are able to see friends and family, that we take care on our roads, our conduct. We take care of each other. That we are mindful that if we do get into a heated situation that it is better to walk away than it is to go to jail.

This is an opportunity for us to rest and reflect on the very best parts of Bermuda. And I know that we Bermudians will use this opportunity to come back from this break, be better equipped to face the challenges of our country tomorrow.

With that being said, I congratulate Somerset for the early win.

An Hon. Member: All right!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jarion Richardson: And I wish all of us a very happy Cup Match. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the motion?

I recognise the Premier. Premier, you have the floor.

PLP GOVERNMENT—REFLECTING ON THE WORK AND PROGRESS BEING MADE

Hon. E. David Burt: I hope to treat you to 20 minutes of political theatre.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Uh-huh.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Because they do not like the theatre, but they can't handle the truth.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, that is right.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is the fact. They cannot handle the truth.

You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is quite funny. For eight years they have tried to tear this Government down, and for eight years they have failed.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: For eight years, they tried to, you know, throw everything against the wall as they said, doom and gloom, invention . . . all the rest—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

Hon. E. David Burt: But yet they fail. But here is where we are.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See, they cannot handle it. Do you hear what they are saying, Madam Deputy Speaker? They are so anxious for me to leave that they are rushing the time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Guess what? Guess what? You all got 15 more months to put up with me—15 more.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And I will take every opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, to remind the country—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order—

Hon. E. David Burt: —of the facts.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [Madam] Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We are not looking forward to his leaving. We wish he would hang around as long as he can.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Hey, point of order—he is misleading the House.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I know full well that particular gentleman, who I have defeated in at least one election, is not being factual in his statements.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now Madam—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: What happened?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I can run. Want to go another round?

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I can arrange that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey, I (what is it called?) I have mercy. I do not need to beat you twice.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: All right. Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly before we close out this summer session and take our break before we come back to the House on 12 September, I certainly think that it is important to reflect on the work and the progress being made by this

Government since we returned to office by the people of Bermuda for the third consecutive time, in the third consecutive landslide election victory.

An Hon. Member: What?

Another Hon. Member: Landslide?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See here is the thing: They cannot handle the fact that they had their second worst election result in February of 2025. But here is the fact, Madam Deputy Speaker: We are . . . we are the Government.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You see . . . you see they are—but here is the thing. We have heard a bit today, Madam Deputy Speaker, from Members of the Opposition, and I certainly will not take my time to address some of the noise . . . some of the traditional, I guess I would say the Deputy Leader said it very clearly: *doom and gloom,* all the things that the Opposition is responsible for doing. But clear to form and as people would say "on brand" for the One Bermuda Alliance there were no recommendations for solutions. Nothing whatsoever.

An Hon. Member: Nope!

Hon. E. David Burt: Complaints but no solutions. No alternatives. And it is clear from our third successive election victory that the people and the voters of this country know who is on their side.

But I will address one of the points made by one of the Honourable Members opposite because the Shadow Minister of Finance said that he *hopes that this Government can go back to our desks and bring a legislation that makes a difference*.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Where has he been?

Hon. E. David Burt: Wow.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Where has he been?

Hon. E. David Burt: So, today we delivered on an election promise to increase the minimum wage. A minimum wage that this Government implemented above the protestations of the other side, the predictions of doom and gloom and challenges which would happen. And guess what? That, Madam Deputy Speaker, makes a difference.

Today we delivered the seventh increase to seniors' pensions keeping up with the rate of inflation since 2017, honouring our commitment to protect those who built this country. That makes a difference.

At the beginning of this month, I joined the Deputy Premier, the Chair of the Bermuda Housing Corporation, where we opened 12 new affordable units at Harmony Hall as part of our continued record investments in affordable housing with over 80 units delivered in the last three years, when that party, Madam Deputy Speaker, built zero when they were in office.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Zero.

Hon. E. David Burt: That makes a difference.

The renovations to the Mangrove Bay Clinic began last month. When finished that clinic will open once again to provide essential health care services to the people of the West End as the people in the East End do have with their upgraded clinic. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, makes a difference.

The Honourable Member of Tourism Transport, Culture and Sport announced earlier to the House this year that we expanded the number of affordable summer camp slots—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —for the children of this country. Because if you are going to combat antisocial behaviour you need to make sure that people have safe spaces.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: That makes a difference.

We heard from the Honourable Minister of Economy and Labour, the doubling of scholarships, the increasing of apprenticeships under this Government when they cut—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did.

Hon. E. David Burt: —those items, refusing to invest in the future. That makes a difference.

And do you know what I heard? I heard that the Honourable Member who took his seat a little while ago said that the children of this country have no future. How dare you, Vance—that Honourable Member. How dare he! When we have record amounts of our young people in international business, when we have record amounts; when we have the lowest youth unemployment in memory—a Youth Employment Strategy that has implemented additional training and items that have been done.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And the Honourable Member will say that the children of this country have no future.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Nonsense! An absolute nonsense.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: An absolute nonsense.

At the same point in time, when we have a significant number of young Bermudians back at home interning in international business, interning throughout companies in our business sector, we hear the comments of *no future*. Come on.

I understand that Honourable Members want to, you know, get up and say things and tear down. But let us at least have a modicum of facts to what we are dealing with. Because the reality is that the young people in this country have a bright future.

An Hon. Member: A bright future.

Hon. E. David Burt: The young people in this country are being given opportunities by this Government to excel in all areas—whether or not it is government or whether or not it is the private sector. That is reality. And we see them day in and day out celebrated for the accomplishments of which they are achieving.

An Hon. Member: Keep telling them, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, I will. Because whatever they want to say over on that side—and they say that the reality is not jibing. Let us be clear. I see young people every day—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —who thank *us* for the opportunities of which they have been given. Who thank *us* for the scholarships that have been extended. Who thank *us* for the apprenticeships that have been extended. Who thank *us* for the investment that has been delivered and the companies they can work with and the places of which they can go, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we will not stop. We will continue delivering for the future. And that, Madam Deputy Speaker, makes a difference.

When we are talking about delivering on making government work better and more efficient, the Honourable Member of Tourism Transport, Culture and Sport unveiled that Phase 2 of ShoreLink is happening. Where we are talking about online payments which are already there. We are talking about real time updates for persons on our public transport, continuing to invest in modernising our infrastructure. That makes a difference.

In June, the Honourable Member, the Minister of Home Affairs, did the matter related to the Cost of Living Summit bringing together government, business, [and] community members to discuss and implement real solutions. That Minister is continuing to do the work.

And here is the thing, Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not going to be easy. But I sincerely hope that the party opposite keeps that energy because I know, I can say almost as sure as day, when the Honourable Member comes with tough solutions they will push back. Because that is what they do.

An Hon. Member: And who they are.

Hon. E. David Burt: They push back against progressive solutions just like they push back against the fact that we reduced payroll tax for 86 per cent of workers while increasing it for high earners. They said it would drive away business but yet we have record number of international business jobs in this country.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: They cannot handle the fact that we have been able to govern and deliver.

Now here is the thing, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is everything perfect? No. Will everything ever be perfect in this country? No. But are things improving? The answer, Madam Deputy Speaker, is yes. A resounding yes.

And let us talk about the things that tangibly make a difference. Because at the same point in time that we said that we are going to rebalance our system of taxation, make sure that higher earners pay more against their objections, it allowed us to get in a position where we could increase capital spending, and we are seeing the results of that capital investment. So, when I hear an Honourable Member opposite make light of the fact that community areas have not received the investment of which they needed are getting the investment from this Government, and hear that Honourable Member lament, *Why are we fixing that dock and this dock?*, that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is why they are over there—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and we are over here.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: Because they just do not get it.

And for eight years they are in the same place, not understanding what is necessary to do to make sure that you improve the conditions of people in this country wherever they are.

So, whether it is seniors, whether it is young people, whether or not it is those persons at work, whether or not it is those persons who are looking to buy homes . . . all of the progress that we have made—none. None, no credit whatsoever. But guess what,

Madam Deputy Speaker? We did not come to Government to get credit from the Opposition.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We came to get credit from the people of Bermuda. And guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker? They appreciate it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But let us talk more about the difference that is being made.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let us talk about the Minister responsible for Youth, Social Development and Seniors, who came to this House and said that we are going to take action on domestic violence and have hired our first certified Domestic Abuse Liaison Officer. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something of which we said we will do it in a methodical fashion, starting in 2022 and now look at the progress that has been made. Backed by the investment from the Ministry of Finance to ensure that they have the resources and tools to combat these particular issues. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, makes a difference.

And when we talk about capital investment let us talk about the facts that the new road pavement equipment has arrived. The work is continuing.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Work is going on throughout the country and we are continuing to make those investments.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So here is the thing, Madam Deputy Speaker. The work is happening.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Say it like you mean it.

Hon. E. David Burt: The progress is being seen, and the people of this country recognise that for the last eight years they have a Government that is putting them first, that is demonstrating strong leadership and building a fairer, more stable Bermuda for the future.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, is there more work to be done? Absolutely. But what is clear, is that we are making significant progress and we will continue to make significant progress delivering on our agenda.

Eight years ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of this country gave the Progressive Labour Party a mandate. They gave us a mandate. Eight years ago, they gave us 24 seats.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh-oh.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is important to know that we have one more than that right now.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: They called 2017 a landslide.

An Hon. Member: Oh, yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am assuming that 2025 must be one as well. But here is the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker. There has not been a day where the Members of this Government have not woken up and said, *How can we continue to improve the conditions in this country?*

An Hon. Member: That is right.

Another Hon. Member: That is correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, for the last eight years that has been our mantra, and for the next eight years, Madam Deputy Speaker, that will be the Progressive Labour Party Government's mantra.

CUP MATCH—A CELEBRATION OF EMANCIPATION AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me move on because the Honourable Member for constituency 11, eight years ago and MP as of today, the Honourable Chris Famous spoke about a change that was made by this Government for the holiday of which we will celebrate on 1 August: Mary Prince Day. And see, not every piece of legislation is going to make an impact in the financial condition of the country, in the employment condition of the country, but there are things and changes that you make that demonstrate a certain moral clarity.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is something that was brought to us from our caucus. It was something that was circulated. And as the Honourable Member said it was something that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, did put through this legislature.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, we run up to the Cup Match holiday. A celebration of emancipation.

A celebration of our culture. A celebration of community.

I have a few messages for the country prior to that. The first one is echoing the calls of the police and others. I beg persons to slow down on the roads.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Please. There is too much loss of life, too much injury, trauma that is caused to families. You will get there. Please, please, please slow down. We do not want to have a holiday where more families are grieving, where more persons are challenged, where more persons become disabled if they have not lost their lives due to the serious injuries which impact and cause our health system money and cause all of our costs to rise. The Honourable Minister of National Security is working on the implementation of the national speed camera system which will help, but in the interim, I beg persons to please slow down.

At the same point in time, number two, if you like a Swizzle or two, do not drive. Do not. We want to make sure that we have a very safe holiday. I have no doubt that the police will be doing their work to maintain order and everything else. I know the host club will certainly do their part to maintain order and all the activities that are going to take place over this weekend, or sorry the upcoming Cup Match holiday. We will invite thousands of visitors to our shores to enjoy a uniquely Bermudian holiday. I ask persons to please make sure to be respectful.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to wish all of the best to the St. George's Cricket Club who will be hosting the annual Cup Match [Cricket] Classic. Everyone knows I get in trouble because I say that St. George's hosts a better Cup Match than Somerset.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I certainly enjoy my time at the St. George's Cricket Club, and I know that we make a presentation to the club. I know that the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, the Minister of Public Works and others have been working with the host club to make sure that they have a successful time. And I wish them all the best and look forward to supporting them in that particular endeavour.

Now I do know that the Honourable Minister of Public Works has been making sure that he is making the roads being paved in St. George's and it will make for a very smooth ride of that Cup back home to its rightful place over in Somerset—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: But what I will say is, Madam Deputy Speaker, no matter what team we support, let us remember why we have this holiday.

An Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And it is because there were those who toiled in bondage and slavery and were freed. And it was for those who refused to go to work—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —on the anniversary of their emancipation that forced the Government of the day to acknowledge it as a holiday. All of us in this community, still a divided community, but all of us in this community need to recognise, acknowledge and understand why we have this holiday and as we are celebrating the sportsmanship on the field and the eventual Somerset victory, we must remember *why* those young men are on the field playing. It is to recognise and celebrate our history.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. And before we end, I would just like to chime in and wish everybody a happy Cup Match. Cup Match is indeed that cultural glue. So even though we have banter and people on opposite sides, it serves as a glue to unite our community. And hopefully as we do recess, we use that time so that when we come back—because we have all undertaken to be here for the benefit of the people in our country—we come back with a renewed purpose to indeed serve in this House for the benefit of the people of Bermuda and for Bermuda itself.

And on that note, do have a safe, enjoyable Cup Match. Thank you, Members.

The House stands adjourned until 12 September. Thank you.

[Gavel]

[At 7:06 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 12 September 2025.]

BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
2025/26 SESSION

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
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June – July 2025

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