



**2022/2023 SESSION
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BERMUDA SENATE
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*Sitting number 8 of the 2022/2023 Session
(pages 339-394)*

**Sen. The Hon. Joan E. Dillas-Wright, MBE, JP
President**

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BERMUDA SENATE**HANSARD
(SENATORS' PROOF)****23 MARCH 2023****10:01 AM***Sitting Number 8 of the 2022/2023 Session*

[Sen. the Hon. Joan E. Dillas-Wright, President, presiding]

The President: Good morning, Senators.
The Senate is in session.
Shall we pray?

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Sen. the Hon. Joan E. Dillas-Wright, President]

The President: Please be seated.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The President: Senator Kiernan Bell, it is over to you.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Madam President, I move that the consideration of the Minutes of the meetings of Monday, the 20th of March 2023, and Wednesday, the 22nd of March 2023, be deferred.

The President: Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection.
The Minutes are deferred.

The President: Thank you, Senator Kiernan Bell, Vice President.

MESSAGES

The Clerk: No messages, Madam President.

The President: Thank you.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The President: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The President: There are none.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The President: There are none.

PETITIONS

The President: There are none.

STATEMENTS

The President: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The President: There are none.

FIRST READING OF PUBLIC BILLS

The President: There are none.

FIRST READING OF PRIVATE BILLS

The President: There are none.

QUESTIONS/QUESTION PERIOD

The President: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The President: The Order of the Day is the resolution of the Committee of the whole for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2023 together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the financial year 2023/24.

I turn it over now to Senator Arianna Hodgson, the Junior Minister of Finance.

Senator Hodgson, you have the floor.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you and good morning, Madam President.

The President: Good morning.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam President, I move that the Senate resolve itself into Committee of the whole for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2023 together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2023/24.

The President: Thank you, Senator Arianna Hodgson.

And I call upon Senator Vice President Kiernan Bell to take the Chair of Committee.

Senate in Committee at 10:04 am

[Sen. Kiernan Bell, Vice President, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

APPROPRIATION ACT 2023

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2023/24

[Continuation thereof]

The Chairman: Good morning, Senators.

Senators, we are now in Committee of the whole for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2023, together with Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2023/24. The Ministry under consideration is Health. The heads for debate under this Ministry are Head 21 at page 149; and Head 22 at page 154. The number of hours allocated to these heads is two. It is 10:04. The Senator in charge is Senator Arianna Hodgson.

Senator Hodgson, how do you wish to proceed?

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 21, Ministry of Health Headquarters; and Head 22, Department of Health.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

HEAD 21—MINISTRY OF HEALTH HEADQUARTERS

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: The Ministry of Health Headquarters budget is found on pages 149 to 153 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Madam Chairman, I am here today to present the budget for the Ministry of Health, Head 21, Ministry of Health Headquarters, found on pages 149 to 153 of the Budget Book.

Madam Chairman, the mandate of the Ministry Headquarters is, *To make Bermuda healthier*. A total of \$10,309,000 has been allocated for Head 21, Headquarters, for 2023/24, which represents a decrease of \$5,581,000, or 35 per cent, over the original budget of 2022/23.

Much of the change is due to the lifting of the public health emergency in November this past year. This means the Ministry is no longer required to provide the services and manage the mitigation measures needed to control and contain the COVID-19 virus. Although COVID-19 remains a global health emergency

according to the World Health Organization—and is a highly infectious disease in our community—in Bermuda we have taken advantage of our impressive vaccination rate to resume our lives. However, we remain vigilant and aware of the potential impact of COVID-19 on our vulnerable populations as we move to this new normal.

I will now speak on each of the programmes and business units under this head.

General

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the programme 2101 (General) comprises 12 FTEs [full-time equivalents] and a budget largely dedicated to grants administration, the implementation of universal health coverage, health disaster coordination and accounting services.

The programme's total budget on page B-149 of the Budget Book is \$9,185,000. Of that, \$4,328,000 is set aside to support the implementation of universal health coverage and cover expenses associated with the day-to-day operations of the Ministry, including the Accounts section. A total of \$4,161,000 is for grants, and \$158,000 is for health disaster coordination, which is a legacy of the Ministry's national health emergency function. The balance of \$538,000 supports the Ministry's Corporate Services policy directorate.

General Administration

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, under business unit 31000, General Administration, the Government is committed to strengthening our health system, and this includes a multi-year journey toward delivering universal health coverage [UHC] for necessary health care services. The aim is to ensure that all residents of Bermuda have access to essential quality health services when they need them without suffering financial hardship.

This transformation to UHC requires the strategic planning of upcoming projects and the ongoing engagement with key stakeholders to ensure decisions and actions impacting UHC are patient-focused and timely. For this, there is an allocation in the Ministry's Headquarters budget in the amount of \$1,463,000 to establish a programme management office (or PMO) for delivery of UHC and a further \$900,000 for consultants.

Madam Chairman, the PMO will manage the coordination, implementation, execution and integration of all projects and associated workstreams in 2023/24 and beyond to accelerate changes toward universal health coverage. The PMO will also support the transitional governance structure whose purpose is to facilitate the engagement of the many and wide-ranging health system participants through stakeholder working groups and forums.

The UHC Steering Committee is presently focused on three building blocks of overall health system strengthening: stewardship and governance, health care service delivery and health care financing.

The Steering Committee confirmed the following foundational projects for 2022/23:

- establish a National Digital Health Strategy;
- agree our starting points (with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment);
- integrated essential care pathway mapping (or the First 1,000 Days in chronic kidney disease);
- build a new pan-system governance model; and
- options for consolidating the government health insurance funds.

Work has commenced on these projects with some close to being completed, either in whole or in part.

Madam Chairman, in the 2023/24 budget year, working with the UHC Steering Committee and the stakeholder working groups and forums, the Ministry of Health will look to build on the progress made in the current year and, in the process, we will

- identify and prioritise opportunities to improve care provisions and access along the care pathways already mapped and work on additional care pathways, including a mental health care pathway, to ensure equitable access to needed health services;
- identify and prioritise opportunities for health system cost savings out of the care pathways already mapped;
- identify opportunities to improve the government's health insurance funds;
- identify alternative funding models which can be used to shift away from a fee-for-service payment model and toward an incentivised outcomes-based model;
- build on the anticipated outputs of the National Digital Health Strategy to formulate the implementation plan for the procurement of an infrastructure build of the integrated care records system; and
- leverage the results of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, determining the appropriate metrics to start tracking to best monitor and measure performance on our population health needs and developing an implementation plan to address data gaps.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Health cannot achieve health system transformation alone. For that reason, in the upcoming budget year the Ministry will complete the set-up of the transitional governance framework envisioned by the 2021 UHC roadmap. It provides a structure for collaboration and engagement with the wider Bermuda community—beyond the Steering Committee—through a broad set of stakeholder

groups comprising nurses and the allied health professionals, the Island's private insurers, the Chamber of Commerce, local and international businesses, and third sector organisations.

Grants Administration

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, regarding business unit 31015, Grants Administration. Page C-18 lists the Ministry of Health grants to several agencies providing essential front-line services to aid public health and social assistance and also a grant for health education. The total budget for the business unit is \$4,161,000. These grant funds are allocated as follows:

- \$3 million for the Lady Cubitt Compassionate Association (LCCA) to cover overseas medical care for uninsured and underinsured persons;
- \$1 million for the Bermuda Health Council;
- \$6,000 for the Sexual Assault Response Team [SART] which, combined with \$55,000 for additional nursing services, will result in a total grant of \$61,000 [for SART]; and
- \$100,000 for the Dr. Barbara Ball Scholarship.

The Bermuda Nursing and Midwifery Council is being transferred to the Bermuda Health Council and, as such, is no longer included in the Grants budget.

Madam Chairman, please note the final approved Estimate Book will reflect the total of \$61,000 for SART under Grants, page C-18, which currently shows a grant of \$6,000. Accordingly, the grant's total on that page C-18 will be amended from \$4,106,000 to \$4,161,000. This change will fix an entry by the Ministry that incorrectly includes \$55,000 for Nursing Services within headquarters salaries, although there is no activity associated with these services. Page B-150 will be amended as well.

Madam Chairman, the LCCA administers the Patient Overseas Financial Aid Programme, working with residents with limited or no ability to pay, to find the right solution.

The 2023/24 year will see an increase in funding for the LCCA from \$2,500,000 to \$3 million to cover the costs associated particularly with exceptional cases. And that is, cases involving medical treatment where the costs are greater than \$50,000. This will better ensure the LCCA is able to cover necessary costs in fulfilling its mission to assist those with insufficient health insurance.

Madam Chairman, also included in the Grants budget for 2023/24 is \$100,000 in funding for the Barbara Ball Scholarship. The Ministry of Health will once again award the Dr. Barbara Ball Public Health Scholarship to Bermudian students with proven financial need seeking careers or professional development in public health.

This scholarship is offered in honour of Dr. Barbara Bertha Ball who was the first born-Bermudian woman to practice medicine in Bermuda and a tireless champion for people's rights. The Dr. Barbara Ball

Scholarship is offered for a range of health care fields of study that benefit public health directly and which are a priority for public health needs in Bermuda. This scholarship was last awarded in 2020 but was interrupted by the demands of the pandemic. The awarding of this scholarship is in direct alignment with the current Bermuda Health Strategy's strategic principle, "Strengthening our Health Care Workforce."

Bermuda Health Council

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, I want to highlight the work of the Bermuda Health Council, a quango under the Ministry of Health. The Bermuda Health Council's mandate is *To regulate, coordinate and enhance the delivery of health services*. The grant for the Bermuda Health Council can be found on page C-18, programme 6895, under Ministry of Health.

In 2023/24 the Health Council's grant will be \$1 million. The Health Council's grant is primarily supplemented by a transfer from the Mutual Reinsurance Fund [MRF], licensing fees paid by health insurers, and licensing and registration fees paid by regulated facilities and health professionals for a total budget of \$4,300,000 for 2023/24.

Madam Chairman, in 2022/23 the work of the Health Council centred on four strategic areas: regulation, quality and standards, and finance and economics, with oversight by audit and governance. I will outline some of the year's achievements now.

Regulation

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, as the primary regulator and registrar of the health system, the Council facilitated the administrative functions of most health professional bodies and health professional conduct committees, and managed licensing functions in respect of select health facilities, namely, diagnostic imaging facilities, laboratories, hospitals, nursing homes and residential care homes.

The Health Council enhanced its paperless process for the registration of over 650 non-physician non-nursing health professionals by adding online payment to its resource toolkit. The Health Council's objective in this is to reduce the administrative burden of statutory board members so that they have increased bandwidth to strategically enhance their specialised fields toward the improvement of population health in Bermuda. In early fiscal year 2024, the Health Council is planning to introduce a change of registration processing by transitioning to a blockchain-enabled platform. The aim is to reduce the processing time of health professional renewal registration applications from six to eight weeks down to seven days.

Madam Chairman, modernisation of regulatory processes continued in 2022/23 with the digitisation of the care home inspection process and reporting tools.

Now, instead of paper scoring, inspections are occurring on tablets with electronic scoring tools, thus reducing human error and bias in the scoring methodology. Also, the Health Council is collaborating with Age Concern to support long-term care leaders in forming a Long-Term Care Administrators Association as part of a strong foundation for the sector. This professional association is intended to assist in regulating and setting quality standards for the provision of services within this market. The Health Council also commenced a financial review of the operations and finances of care homes.

Madam Chairman, in response to concerns about the affordability of prescription medication, the Bermuda Government provided the Health Council with the mandate to implement the Bermuda Drug Formulary. The goal of this work is to ultimately create a more cost-effective prescription medication market by setting the prices of select medications, monitoring compliance with regulated pricing and negotiating the price at which medications are imported. It continues to be imperative that we stay ahead of the curve when it comes to having an efficient prescription medication marketplace.

The Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee identified seven medications for initial listing, and in 2023/24 the Council will be finalising and publishing the pricing.

Quality and Standards

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, within its goal to enhance the integrity and thus use of local health system data, in fiscal year 2022/23 the Health Council finalised the development of unique patient identifiers for individuals and national provider identifiers for health care businesses and professionals. While the initial intent was to integrate the unique patient identifiers into the Bermuda Hospitals Board's PEARL system prior to launch, the Health Council is working with the Bermuda Hospitals Board to integrate these identifiers into the next phase of development and subsequently to require its use in the processing of health insurance claims and transactions.

As the transition toward greater standardisation is still evolving, this modernisation of data will lead to a much better understanding of our population's health needs in the future. During the upcoming fiscal year, the Health Council will build on its other recently implemented information technology systems for case management, health data analytics and online payments by working with other health system stakeholders to: build a more comprehensive health care business directory and social services network platform; roll out digital inspection applications; and provide more transparency for its health data. The goal is for consumers to be able to delve into anonymised data to understand better how the local system runs and where there may be room for improvements and evidence-based innovations.

The Health Council also manages the programme which supports kidney transplant coordination. Through this programme, education on kidney transplants is being conducted and comprehensive coordination is provided to those designated to receive a new organ. Right now, dialysis costs approximately \$135,000 per patient per year, and collectively for our 200 patients, close to \$30 million a year. Each transplant is estimated to save as much as \$700,000 over a 10-year period for each of those patients receiving a kidney transplant.

In the current fiscal year, the programme saw six individuals transplanted, a record high, resulting in an anticipated health system savings of more than \$4 million from this year's cohort alone. This is the type of savings that can be reinvested in public health programmes leading to improvement of Bermuda's disease profile and better ageing of the population over time.

Madam Chairman, the teams work to streamline the ability of persons to serve as live organ donors. We seek to boost the likelihood of individuals donating organs to family and friends using best practices of multiple other countries. In concert with the work of improving organ donation, I am pleased to report the Health Council is investigating the expansion of global partners that will be cost-effective in delivering these surgical procedures, as well as the possibility of such services being delivered here on Island.

Financing and Economics

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the Health Council continues to enhance its National Health Accounts Reports process. These reports detail total health system expenditure during each year.

As the standards change around how finances should be accounted for within a health system, the Health Council is working with the internal and external stakeholders to make sure that our numerical comparisons are in line with the rest of the world.

During the year, the Health Council continued to regulate the prices of Standard Health Benefit services. The pricing of these services continues to be guided by the resource-based relative value scale (or RBRVS) structure and incorporates quarterly reviews. The RBRVS structure is also used to guide fair reimbursement practices for insurers and fair pricing practices for providers. The intent in the future is to stabilise this methodology in practice, and then more toward stabilising and regulating how copayments are charged within the delivery of services. The current issue with copayments is that the optics of high copayments being linked to individuals delaying their care and thereby leading to longer-term health complications and avoidable costs to the health care system. The intent is to ensure access to the right care at the right time for all people without the introduction of health care disparities.

Understanding the spend that takes place within our health system is an important variable in understanding where there are opportunities to be more efficient or opportunities to take on new innovations and progressive challenges. Madam Chairman, the Health Council has a structure for reviewing such opportunities through its health technology assessment process. This process includes a scrutiny of peer review research and market literature from around the world, an analysis of local utilisation and demand data, and a discussion by local experts on potential advantages and disadvantages of change. In 2023/24 the Health Council will continue to refine this process so that there is more evidence-based decision-making involved in the financing of local health care.

In 2022/23 the Health Council advocated for the legislative changes necessary to finalise the standardisation of the medical and dental charges, to update the BHB Fee Regulations and make changes to the Standard Health Benefit Regulations to allow them to work better for the broader health system in a modern context. In addition, the Health Council continued to work on updates to legislation for more significant penalties and accountability facility licensing requirements.

I am pleased to report that with resources no longer focused on the public health emergency, the Ministry is working with the Health Council to advance these priorities in 2023/24.

Audit and Governance

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the Health Council has a track record of timely financial transparency and, working closely with the Auditor General has tabled on-time and unqualified audited financial statements year over year. The Health Council's annual reports and financial statements are completed through fiscal year 2021 and are in progress for fiscal year 2022. The Council looks forward to completing this financial audit and then preparing for the audit for fiscal year 2023.

Turning to the Future

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, looking forward to 2023/24, the Health Council will continue with its wide remit of performing functions that improve the health system. As the population and its health needs evolve, it is important for the Health Council to maintain agility in how it accomplishes its mandate. As it continues to promote community involvement and solution generation through the innovation programme, the Health Council also looks to support the next generation of health professionals through education, mentorship and exposure programmes.

Of note for 2023/24, the Health Council will carry on its work to create more structure and planning for long-term care support frameworks that are effective in reducing risk and preventing disease, identifying

ways to better manage health care financing, listening to the concerns of the public, and ensuring that patients, providers and businesses are afforded fairness, privacy and protection in their dealings.

Corporate Services and National Health Emergency

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Business unit 31020, Corporate Services, and business unit 31997, National Health Emergency. Madam Chairman, the estimated budget for Head 21, Corporate Services Unit, is \$538,000. This unit comprises the Ministry's Policy Directorate and the staff who work closely with Minister Kim Wilson, as well as the senior management team to undertake research and assist with the development of policy and regulations. As with other sections in the Ministry, the resources have now shifted from the pandemic to the more regular business of the Ministry, and we have planned a very busy legislative agenda for 2023/24.

The budget allocation for what was known as the National Health Emergency is \$158,000. This unit undertakes critical health disaster coordination for the Ministry and is a legacy of our pandemic experience which highlighted the need for planning and preparedness. In 2022/23 the Ministry improved its standing with respect to the Pan American Health Organization's plan of action for Disaster Risk Reduction, moving from satisfying one out of six indicators to satisfying four out of six indicators. In 2023/24 one of the work streams is to successfully accomplish the remaining indicators and thus be better positioned to manage the public health risks associated with disasters and extreme weather emergencies.

This completes my remarks on all the business units under the programme General.

The second programme for Head 21, Ministry Headquarters, is the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.

Chief Medical Officer

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, programme 2102 under Head 21 is the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (OCMO), found on page B-149 of the Budget Book. Its total budget for fiscal year 2023/24 is \$1,124,000, which funds two business units, 31030, Health Care Registration and Regulation; and 31040, Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit. The office ordinarily consists of eight FTEs [full-time equivalents], and one part-time consultant pharmacy inspector.

With the lifting of the public health emergency, most of the staff assigned to work with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer have returned to their substantive roles. The instant command structure is working to document the lessons learned during the pandemic. Examples of good practice are now being embedded into the day-to-day practices across the health economy.

The remit of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer consists of five primary duties: (1) registration and

regulation of health care professionals; (2) pharmaceutical drug control; (3) epidemiology and surveillance; (4) statutory public health responsibilities; and (5) health emergency planning, resilience and response.

Madam Chairman, previously, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer registered all health care professionals, as well as health care facilities, namely, hospitals, pharmacies, clinical laboratories and diagnostic imaging facilities. From 2020, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer transferred most of its registration and regulatory functions relative to health care professionals and facilities to the Bermuda Health Council.

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer currently manages the registration and re-registration of medical practitioners as well as the registration and regulation of pharmacies. The Office of the Chief Medical Officer also provides administrative support to the Bermuda Medical Council, and the Chief Medical Officer [CMO] is the executive officer of the Bermuda Medical Council.

The office retains functions relevant to medical practitioners and pharmacy regulation. This includes oversight of the registration processes, the management of patient concerns, and ensuring best practice clinical standards are in place and maintained to protect and support the delivery of ongoing high-quality medical and pharmaceutical care in Bermuda. Also, this office manages the administration for the Professional Conduct Committee for medical practitioners on Island.

Madam Chairman, the Office of the CMO's pharmaceutical drugs control responsibilities include ensuring that annual inspections of pharmacies are conducted and monitoring the importation of prescription drugs. This includes ongoing checks of controlled or banned drugs to ensure that these items are kept safe and are only received by appropriate responsible health care businesses and individuals. Additionally, the office ensures that Bermuda stays within its assigned quotas of controlled drugs and reports on controlled drug importation to the International Narcotics Control Board [INCB], [in Vienna, Austria]. The International Narcotics Control Board monitors compliance with the United Nations International Drug Control Conventions. This office also ensures that medications imported to the Island are in keeping with the provisions of the Pharmacies and Poisons Act.

Health protection and community health assessment are two essential public health functions carried out by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer's Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (or ESU). The ESU monitors the occurrence of diseases on the Island, both infectious diseases and select chronic non-communicable diseases, to help prevent and control their spread and impact. The ESU receives reports from individual health care providers and laboratories and will investigate unusual disease occurrences. The provision of contact tracing and case management functions and

services are integral to preventing and/or mitigating any future outbreaks of disease.

Periodic community health surveys are conducted to monitor and document the health of Bermuda's population. The STEPS to a Well Bermuda survey, planned for 2023/24, is just one example. Data from community health surveys provide population health information that is essential to setting health system priorities and for planning.

Madam Chairman, additional responsibilities of the Office of the CMO are to facilitate legislative functions, advise government departments on health matters and to support the essential regulatory work of statutory boards and councils. The office also serves as Bermuda's public health focal point for communications from regional and international authorities such as the World Health Organization [WHO], the Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] and the Caribbean Public Health Agency [CARPHA]. Essential collaborations with these partners provide Bermuda with access to facilities to develop and train our public health professionals and to support and implement strategic plans and technical assistance for the prevention, mitigation and management of public health emergencies, including preparedness for disaster management and extreme weather events.

Madam Chairman, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer is developing health emergency plans. In the past year this team provided services to care for oxygen-dependent patients who required uninterrupted power supply during the hurricane. The team also developed and executed a polio outbreak plan. This was well received and positions Bermuda to be able to deal with outbreaks like this in the future. The Office of the CMO works closely with the Health Disaster Coordination Unit.

In 2022/23 the Office of the Chief Medical Officer led the development of Bermuda's first Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This is a crucial part of our progress toward UHC, as it helps to set out our starting point. This work brought together all parts of Bermuda's health system, included a focus on the social determinants of health and was supported by the UK Health Security Agency. The result of this assessment will help understand the priorities for action and form the baseline for improvement over the coming years.

Madam Chairman, in the Office of the CMO a budget of \$645,000 is allocated to health care registration and regulation. Over the past year the section has ensured the administration of a variety of professional services relevant to more than 200 registered medical practitioner professionals, processed over 130 requests for controlled pharmaceutical drug licence requests and completed more than 50 pharmacy inspections.

For fiscal year 2023/24, a total of \$479,000 is budgeted for the work of the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit [ESU]. Capacity building in public health has been supported by CARPHA, PAHO and the UKHSA,

formerly the Public Health England, since 2020 and has assisted the staff of the ESU, as well as the staff in the Department of Health to meet the challenges of preventing and controlling emerging diseases such as the novel coronavirus pandemic, and in managing outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as pertussis (or whooping cough). These organisations have also supported us in the management of non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Through the tireless work of the Public Health Emergency Response Team (PHERT) and the Surveillance Assessment Response Committee, the Office of the CMO coordinates and collaborates with a broad range of health and other community stakeholders Island-wide to prevent and mitigate public health threats. The relationships established and maintained via Public Health Emergency Response Team or the Surveillance Assessment Response Committee have proven to be priceless for the efforts of mitigating the COVID-19 virus during the last two-plus years.

Madam Chairman, to date there have been over [18,000] cases of COVID-19 identified in Bermuda and sadly, 161 deaths. This pandemic has impacted the lives of all Bermudians and has also had a profound impact on our economy and the fabric of our society. It is fair to say that without the dedication and expertise of the Office of the CMO, the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit and the entire Ministry of Health team, our volunteers, and private and public sector partners, Bermuda could have fared so much worse.

The trend of lower reported cases of communicable diseases other than COVID-19 has been reversed in 2022. This may be related to the lifting of the mandatory public health measures implemented to control the COVID-19 pandemic, such as physical distancing and mask wearing. We now have more reported cases of influenza, RSV and streptococcal infections, like many other countries in the world. The ESU has managed 225 individual case reports of communicable diseases in addition to managing COVID-19 in 2022.

The Office of the CMO has continued to provide critical support to the vaccination programme to ensure that all eligible residents of Bermuda are vaccinated and protected from the COVID-19 virus. Working with colleagues in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and Government House, the Office of the CMO worked tirelessly to secure vaccines for all residents of Bermuda. We must also acknowledge the incredible efforts of both Government House and the UK to assist us with the supply of these critical vaccines at this most challenging of times.

In all, by the 31st of January 2023, our vaccination teams have administered over 200,000 vaccinations. Impressively, our mass vaccination campaign ended with 75 per cent of the general population immunised with two doses.

Madam Chairman, finally, the development of the important Chronic Disease Register continues to evolve and be refined. The Office of the CMO is rebooting efforts to establish a chronic renal disease register previously stalled by the pandemic. This is in partnership with the Bermuda Hospitals Board's Tumour Registry. We expect this to be up and running within the coming year and to provide valuable insight into this disease that is a source of suffering and high cost to Bermuda.

Madam Chairman, that ends my presentation on programme 2102, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.

The Chairman: Thank you. Please proceed to the next head.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

HEAD 22—DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: It gives me pleasure to present the budget for Head 22, the Department of Health, found on pages B-154 through B-164 of the Budget Book. The total current expenditure is estimated to be \$30,429,000 for 2023/24. This is an increase of \$1,739,000 compared with the original 2022/23 budget.

Vision and Mission: the Health Department's vision is *Healthy people and healthy communities*. The department's mission is *To promote and protect optimal health and well-being in Bermuda*. The 290 Department of Health officers work to ensure the health and well-being of the general population. And like the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, many of the department staff redeployed during the pandemic can now return to their substantive posts. Services in the department are delivered through the five sections of Administration, Community Health, All Health, Environmental Health and Central Laboratory.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Health, section 2205, Administration, comprises the business units of Administration, Health Promotion, Comprehensive School Health and Child Care Regulations. Under unit 32230, Administration, the 2023/24 budget estimate for this business unit 32230 is listed on page B-155 and is \$429,000.

Madam Chairman, public health services are more important now than ever, given the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on our community. The Health Department's efforts are focusing again on prevention of non-communicable chronic disease and mental illness. It is fair to say that the post-pandemic period is proving challenging. Not unlike jurisdictions around the world, health care workers are experiencing burnout and the depletion of resources.

Notwithstanding [the aforementioned], the Department of Health Offices are highly engaged in work toward UHC and the First 1,000 Days integrated care

pathway work Throne Speech initiatives. They will also collaborate with the Education Ministry's Signature Schools Learning Pathways as far as reasonably practicable, as these are all meaningful and impactful projects for public health and equity.

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for the Health Promotion and Wellness business unit of the Department of Health listed as cost centre 32240 on page B-155 is \$534,000. Madam Chairman, the Health Promotion and Wellness Programme develops and implements policies, programmes and products that will promote health and wellness in the community in collaboration with public health partners.

In 2023/24 a portion of the increase in funding for the Department of Health is earmarked for such health promotion and wellness initiatives. The Commitment to Change campaign goal is to encourage residents to make commitments toward healthy living. These changes do not need to be big, but they need to be consistent. Small steps help us to create valuable habits which help us achieve big goals. Instead of undertaking a huge makeover, we might be able to improve our health with a series of small changes. This approach may take longer, but it could also motivate you to make some big changes. Small, intentional steps that people can make are as follows:

- Choosing water: Cutting out just one sugar-sweetened soda can easily save you 100 or more calories a day.
- Eating more vegetables: Start by eating one extra vegetable each day, whether frozen, fresh or canned.
- Exercising daily: If you do not exercise at all, start with a 10-minute walk and increase the minutes as you get stronger.
- Balancing mental well-being by reducing stress. Try breathing slowly and deeply for a few minutes each day. It can help you relax.

Madam Chairman, considering the small size of Bermuda's community, it is hard for some with mental illness or a mental disorder to seek help. It is therefore imperative to develop strategies in our communities to destigmatise mental illness. In 2023/24, the Community Adolescent Mental Health Training programme will train school-based health professionals, including school nurses; allied health professionals, including speech pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists; the Healthy Schools Coordinator; the Education Ministry's Counselling Services; and sporting organisations. Participants in the programme will learn about the stigma; complete the youth mental health first aid course to learn about adolescent development, signs and symptoms of common disabling mental health problems and crisis situations; learn when and how to refer students; and promote anti-stigma in the schools and sports club environments.

As a result of the training, it is anticipated that participants will be instrumental in changing the culture around mental health, increase help-seeking behaviour

and destigmatising mental well-being. This target audience will help to address the health issue from an early education and developmental perspective and provide a safe and supportive environment for student mental well-being.

Madam Chairman, HEARTS in the Americas is the Pan American Health Organization's flagship initiative for improving high blood pressure control and heart disease risk management in doctors' offices using a standardised treatment protocol. HEARTS has been implemented in 24 countries in the Americas. In Bermuda, funding will be made available in 2023/24 for the Department of Health and several collaborating primary care physicians to demonstrate that the HEARTS protocol can get improved results locally and to harvest the learning before the protocol is rolled out and available to the entire health system.

The HEARTS protocol is a simple, practical and easy-to-follow treatment protocol that can vastly improve control of high blood pressure. Other countries that have adopted HEARTS are seeing faster, sustainable control with consistent actions being followed by physicians, clients and their relatives. In addition to medication, HEARTS includes counselling and support for lifestyle change and diet which, added to reducing high blood pressure, can reduce obesity and the risk of heart attack and stroke.

The 2023/24 budget estimate for the Nutrition Services business unit 32110 on page B-154 is \$202,000. Nutrition Services is both a sub-programme of Community Health and a sub-programme of the Health Promotion and Wellness unit because there is both a clinical component and a population-based component. Nutrition Services is committed to providing sustainable nutrition community programmes to connect, engage and strengthen the community's awareness of strategies to improve healthier lifestyles and healthier eating. In 2023/24 this sub-programme will be refortified with two officers, reflecting the Ministry's renewed emphasis on health promotion and prevention. This accounts for part of the department's increase in funding for the upcoming financial year.

This year Nutrition Services partnered with the Grow, Eat, \$ave workshop, Department of Parks, local judges, non-governmental agencies and sponsors to present the Bermuda Parish Gardening Competition. Both projects aimed to encourage gardening. The Grow, Eat, \$ave programme continues in partnership with facilitator Chaplain Santucci, the Bermuda Agriculture Group, and community volunteers and sponsors. Participation remains high as members of the community seek sustainable food opportunities to feed themselves and their families.

Performance measures indicate 68 per cent of participants increased their consumption of five servings of fruits and vegetables, the minimal servings known to reduce certain health risks. Growing your own food means healthier diets. The Bermuda Parish Gardening Competition reached into each parish and was

inclusive of any skill level, garden size and individual or group submission. Engagement in this competition celebrated the excellence of gardening, recognised the passion of growing food and worked toward sustainability. The Grow, Eat, \$ave programme and the Bermuda Parish Gardening Competition will feature again in 2023/24.

Another Health Promotion and Wellness activity is the Complete Health Improvement Programme [CHIP]. The first session held in June 2022 had 11 graduates from 17 persons enrolled. The second session in October 2022 had 13 graduates out of the 19 enrolled. For the second session, group improvements included weight loss, waistline inches lost, decreased blood sugar and decreased cholesterol. Performance measures indicate a 100 per cent increase in consumption of five servings of fruit and vegetables by all participants.

Comprehensive School Health

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for the Comprehensive School Health, business unit 32265 on page B-155, is \$124,000. This budget figure reflects the decision to have Healthy Schools as a separate business unit, rather than as part of other Department of Health business units, and accounts for the funding line item in the Budget Book.

Healthy Schools promotes health in schools through such governmental departments as Education; the National Drug Control and Mirrors; community health partners including the Bermuda Diabetes Association, the Bermuda Cancer and Health Centre, and the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute; and the Department of Health school-based programmes such as child and school health, nutrition services, oral health, community rehabilitation services and environmental health. Healthy Schools has 10 components of health and has been adopted by 31 of the 33 public and private schools since 2007.

In compliance with the school nutrition policy, the Healthy Schools team is working more closely with the Department of Education to limit all fast-food deliveries to schools for any reason and food-focused fundraisers to no more than once per month in schools. Healthy Schools has provided schools with recommendations for non-food fundraisers. All but one public school has a bottle-filling station, making fresh, clean water the easiest choice. All private schools have filtered water systems and/or bottle-filling stations.

In 2023/24 Healthy Schools will continue to work with the Education Department's Curriculum Officer for Physical Education and Health to improve the completion of the fitness ground assessments for P5 to S4 students in terms 1 and 3. The purpose is to help students understand their own health-related fitness.

Child Care Regulations

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, 2023/24 budget estimate for the Child Care Regulations, business unit 32290 on page B-155, is \$308,000.

Over the last fiscal year all eligible child care providers [CCPs], those caring for a maximum of three children in a home setting, underwent the STARS inspection. The results were posted on the government website to educate the public and increase transparency. The majority of child care providers met or exceeded the minimal standard, receiving three stars, which is satisfactory, four stars is very good and five stars is excellent.

Day care centres [DCCs], that is, nursery schools also underwent their pilot STARS inspection in preparation for their full STARS inspection which is taking place in 2023. Again, the majority of day care centres met or exceeded the minimum standard. Day care centres and child care providers that did not meet the minimal standard were given additional monitoring and support, or placed on a provisional licence if warranted. This STARS inspection tool is comprehensive and allows the officers to evaluate aspects of child care while providing support and guidance throughout the process.

To support the CCPs and DCCs, quarterly meetings are held to strengthen the lines of communication and provide updates and support related to the inspection process. These meetings also afford providers the opportunity to offer feedback and make recommendations related to the inspection process.

This ends my remarks on section 2205, Administration.

Community Health

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the Department of Health section 2201, Community Health, on page B-154 of the Budget Book comprises 13 business units and has a 2023/24 estimated budget of \$22,282,000.

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for Child Health, listed as business unit 32030 on page B-154 is \$2,927,000. The Child Health budget in 2023/24 will increase by \$263,000. The largest contributors to this increase are rising costs of shipping and medical supplies, and vaccines. Funds have also been allocated for contractors who are working to digitise paper-based immunisation records and helping to enhance school surveillance.

Madam Chairman, the Child Health unit consists of four sections: Immunisation; Child Health; School Health, including Asthma Education; and Travel Health. These sections provide preventive and curative health services for infants, children, adolescents, adults, seniors and the traveling public. Services include health and developmental assessments, screenings, referrals, treatment of minor ailments, health education, health promotion, anticipatory guidance, adults'

and seniors' immunisations and travel consultation for travel to high-risk areas.

Bermuda's expanded programme on immunisation plans for the needs of vaccines in the child and adult schedules. EPI procures most of its vaccines through the PAHO's [Pan American Health Organization's] revolving fund. The process assures safe, effective and quality vaccines. Universal access for many of the vaccines is provided through the public and private sectors.

Madam Chairman, with respect to immunisation, data on immunisation coverage shows a level of 86 per cent for two-year olds, a decrease of 2 per cent from the previous year. Vaccine hesitancy remains a challenge, and the Child Health team is working on strategies to provide the community with education relating to vaccine-preventable diseases. In 2023/24 the vaccine hesitancy strategy will be reigniting activities along with launching the HealthyPeople BDA app, tentatively set for April 2023 during the vaccination week of the American celebrations. The staff continues to work diligently with clients on catch-up immunisations for their children.

Madam Chairman, expanded programmes of immunisation training are conducted annually for health care professionals in the public, private and institutional settings and allied partners. Data from the 2022 annual Flu Express indicated that 1,340 doses of the flu vaccine were administered from the eastern, central and western areas of the Island. The flu vaccine is also administered in all of our clinics with distribution to long-term care facilities and the private sector.

Madam Chairman, the health visitors working in the Child Health unit have completed contact with 90 per cent of all parents of newborns, and 85 per cent of new mothers were screened for maternal well-being at six weeks. Initially, these were done primarily via telephone due to the health risks, COVID-19 restrictions and limited staff availability due to reassignments. As of September 2022, a full 60 per cent of health visitors are working within the unit and have restarted home visits for all targeted services. The department's health visitors play a crucial role in providing services for all families with children under five years old.

Madam Chairman, the School Health programme continues to be challenged with human resource issues, and just 15 per cent of school health and development assessments were realised in this fiscal year. Of the screenings conducted, 33 per cent of, or 86 five-year-olds were identified as overweight or obese. Whilst these data are based only on a portion of the cohort, approximately 52 per cent of the target population, it is concerning. Factors contributing to these findings include diet, screen time, lack of physical activity and a lack of health checks. Addressing mental health and well-being for families of the school-age population has and will continue to remain a priority. Also, the School Asthma Education programme and its

services were disrupted by the pandemic. However, every effort is being made to recommence this work.

Travel health was negatively affected by global travel restrictions. However, since travel restrictions have been relaxed locally and abroad, the department has seen a marked increase in people travelling. There were approximately 743 travel consultations conducted in 2022 compared with 106 in 2021. Consultations on travel provide education on water-, food- and vector-borne illness prevention to reduce the risk of Bermuda's residents returning with infectious diseases.

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimates for Physiotherapy listed as business unit 32080, and Occupational Therapy listed as business unit 32120, both on page B-154, are \$1,128,000 and \$1,016,000, respectively.

The remit of the Community Rehabilitation Services Occupational Therapy [OT] and Physiotherapy [PT] services is to maximise the functional potential of individuals with delays in normal motor development or with physical movement challenges. This rehabilitation service, which spans the age spectrum, is split into three teams: early intervention, school-based paediatric therapy and seniors.

Madam Chairman, within the early intervention team, dedicated specialists, OTs and PTs provide early intervention for babies and young children at risk of developmental delays and/or disability. The OT and PT early intervention service aims to complete a full assessment on referred clients within 20 working days to ensure the appropriate intervention is provided and to mitigate any delays in functioning. These interventions reduce the number of referrals sent by the early intervention teams to school-based services. They also empower parents with knowledge and strategies to promote optimal development for their children.

The school-based paediatric team aims to increase early recognition of developmental delays and provide a more equitable service for school-age children with sensory motor delays throughout the year and not just during school term time. It must also be noted that school-aged children with additional learning needs due to complex health conditions and/or sensory motor delays require regular monitoring and intervention to retain their functional ability and to access education. During the current fiscal year, the team successfully conducted sensory motor screens for each child entering Primary 1 in the government system. Services were also provided to summer camps for children with complex medical needs to prevent regression of skills attained through the school year.

Madam Chairman, the OT and PT seniors' team aims to support clients to remain as independent as possible in their own homes. The seniors' team conducts home safety and falls-risk assessments for all seniors who are referred in order to minimise the risk of

falls at home. In 2022/23 client and caregiver training were provided to maximise function and promote ageing in place.

Speech and Language Services

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: The 2023/24 budget estimate for Speech and Language Services listed at business unit 32100 on page B-154 is \$1,688,000.

Madam Chairman, the Health Department's Speech and Language Programme provides speech, language and feeding/swallowing assessments and intervention services across the community. The staff work in collaboration with the Education Department's Child Development Programme for children aged from birth to four or five years of age and across all levels of the Bermuda Government schools for those aged up to 18. In addition, services are provided to students with special needs who attend Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy and to students who attend Bermuda's private schools and home schools.

Madam Chairman, speech and language pathologists work closely with parents, school personnel, allied health professionals in private homes and clinical settings to raise awareness of speech and language delays and disorders, to promote functional communication skills, as well as to prevent life-threatening complications that may occur during eating and swallowing.

Madam Chairman, a combined 341 cases were followed for intervention by Speech and Language Services this year. Caseloads vary between 40 and 68 clients per officer. Services to middle and senior schools have been adapted to be provided through a consultative model where the therapists provide school personnel and parents with the appropriate resources and strategies for clients with complimentary direct services. Services were also provided to Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy.

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimates for community health nursing, listed as business unit 32060, and community health administration listed as business unit 32010, both found on page B-154, are \$1,723,000 and \$1,215,000, respectively. Community health nursing budget in 2023/24 will increase by \$185,000. The largest contributors to this increase are additional funds for the licence for the electronic medical records for clients, medical supplies and funding to ensure the enhanced operation of the adult preventative clinic with a nurse practitioner on staff.

Madam Chairman, adult community nursing works in partnership with other health and care providers to meet client needs, offering support, health education information and advice. The department's adult preventative clinic is designed to support persons and reduce stress while increasing capacity, educating individuals and families, and providing life skills to enable healthy living practices. The adult health clinic has in-

creased its capacity by extending its hours and is seeing 60 per cent more patients than it did in previous years, efficiently helping and supporting individuals who are uninsured or underinsured and cannot afford their co-payments.

Madam Chairman, the community health administration unit consists of administration support and health education. These services provide administrative support for the programmes operating in the main Hamilton health centres as well as the satellite clinics. The programme assures conditions in which the facility can operate safely, effectively and efficiently for clients and staff.

Madam Chairman, challenges associated with the Hamilton Health Clinic's water, which caused staff to be relocated, brought considerable disruption and displacement to programmes and services during 2022. The Warwick satellite clinic served as the main alternative site for other clinical services from April to September before a new venue was secured. The transition to the third floor of Reid Hall, which is 3 Reid Street, Hamilton, has positively impacted service users and staff. Fortunately, work at the Hamilton Health Centre is close to completion, and it is anticipated that services will resume from that location very shortly.

Madam Chairman, the redesign and facility modernisation plan for Mangrove Bay Clinic received Planning permission this year. And capital funding will be available in the upcoming budget year to proceed with the building permit, construction drawings and tendering process. The services being provided at the Mangrove Bay Clinic will include services similar to those provided in Hamilton, including integrated mental health services in partnership with MWI.

Madam Chairman, there were notable efforts made within the social work team this year, including 94 additional new referrals of which 67 per cent were successfully navigated through the care and health systems for services or support for unmet needs. Such needs include, but are not limited to, mental health or addiction counselling, and food and medical treatment. Of those discharged, 95 per cent described an overall satisfaction with the service. Support services and advocacy were provided to connect persons and families with resources to help meet their needs. There were a total of 956 events which included home visits, individual and family meetings, and collaboration and correspondence with other agencies such as Ageing and Disability Services.

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for Sexual and Reproductive Health, listed at business unit 32040 on page B-154, is \$932,000.

Madam Chairman, the Sexual and Reproductive Health programme consists of two subprogrammes: the Communicable Diseases programme and the Maternal Health and Family Planning programme. The programmes aim to reduce unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates, including HIV, by continually improving access to high

quality services, screening, education and health promotion, counselling, and referral services.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITOR

The Chairman: Senator Hodgson, could I just interrupt just to acknowledge that the Chief Strategy Officer of the Department of Health, Aideen Ratteray Pryse, has joined us.

Welcome.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman. (Let me back up.)

The 2023/24 budget estimate for Sexual and Reproductive Health, listed as business unit 32040 on page B-154, is \$932,000.

The Sexual and Reproductive Health programme consists of two subprogrammes: the Communicable Diseases programme and the Maternal Health and Family Planning programme. The programmes aim to reduce unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates, including HIV, by continually improving access to high quality services, screening, education and health promotion, counselling, and referral services.

To reach these goals and strengthen community-led responses, the programme has developed strong collaborative links with many community-based agencies like the Bermuda Assessment and Referral Centre [BARC], the Centre Against Abuse Home (a charity for the homeless), Turning Point, STAR, Harbour Light and focused charities for substance abuse and HIV, as well as the Salvation Army. Partnering with other organisations can offer innovative ways to reach our communities and strengthen sexual health services. There is also strong collaboration with obstetricians to provide antenatal care and safe delivery for uninsured women.

In 2022/23 a total of 83.6 per cent of pregnant women attending the clinic received three or more antenatal appointments. Evidence suggests more antenatal contact with professionals is associated with greater maternal satisfaction and reduces perinatal mortality. The maternity benefit, introduced on 1 November 2021, assists antenatal clients with payment to their assigned OB/GYN. Other components of sexual and reproductive health services include immunisations for antenatal clients, cancer prevention and health screenings for males and females.

The number of people compliant with treatment for HIV infection remains high at 98 per cent, an important factor in preventing AIDS, prolonging survival and reducing the risk of transmission of HIV to others.

Madam Chairman, the Sexual Assault Response Team [SART] recently reconvened to review

collaborative efforts. The Sexual Assault Response Team is supported by Sexual and Reproductive Health Services through coordination during the investigation process. A team approach assists professionals to provide an immediate, quality victim-centred response to sexual assaults in the community. As mentioned previously, funding for SART will be provided by a grant from the Ministry Headquarters in 2023/24.

Madam Chairman, the Sexual and Reproductive Team starts a new initiative this month, which will see male and female clients between the ages of 18 to 26 years being offered the HPV vaccine. Human Papilloma Virus can cause certain cancers in both men and women and is a common sexually transmitted infection. Research has shown that HPV vaccines can prevent more than 90 per cent of oral, anal and genital cancers caused by HPV infection from ever developing.

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for the Clinical Laboratory listed as business unit 32090 on page B-154 is \$787,000. This comprises the government clinical laboratory and the Bermuda Molecular Diagnostic and Research Laboratory (or MDL). The incorporation of MDL to the Health Department's established clinical laboratory business unit accounts for the increase of \$519,000 listed in the Budget Book.

Madam Chairman, the government clinical laboratory is a Commission on Office Laboratory Accreditation (or COLA) accredited laboratory situated at the Hamilton Health Centre. The government clinical laboratory currently supports the programmes within the clinic, such as maternal health and family planning, the communicable disease clinic, the adult health programme, child health and oral health as needed.

The clinical laboratory also serves as the public health clinical laboratory for Bermuda, assisting with outbreak investigation and public health emergencies. The clinical laboratory provides specimen referrals for highly infectious organisms that cannot be tested locally. The government clinical laboratory continues to focus on microbiology testing while maintaining molecular testing for sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhoea and chlamydia. The laboratory will continue to participate in annual projects such as antimicrobial resistant surveillance. Antimicrobial resistance is a global threat that requires much attention and collaboration with several sectors in the public health system.

MDL is pursuing COLA accreditation and is enrolled in an international programme of proficiency testing as a quality assurance measure. The molecular laboratory continues to provide routine screening of COVID-19 for high-risk clients such as dialysis patients and care homes across the Island and to assist with genomic sequencing. At the same time, MDL is expanding testing for programmes such as maternal health and family planning, the communicable disease clinic, the adult health programme and child health using an immunoassay analyser. MDL may expand local

testing for wastewater surveillance as well. The scoping of work is now underway.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Health operates two exemplary long-term care facilities, Sylvia Richardson Care Facility in St. George's and Lefroy House Care Community in Sandys. Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for Lefroy House Care Community, is listed as business unit 32000 on page B-154, is \$4,867,000. The 2023/24 budget estimate for Sylvia Richardson Care Facility, listed as business unit 32015 on page B-154, is \$5,713,000.

Both facilities provide skilled care and promote independence and optimal health for persons aged 65 years and over who have significant nursing needs requiring 24-hour facility-based care. The two facilities are residential care communities, providing comprehensive medical, nursing, environmental and recreational services to the residents and respite care elders. Our aim is to maintain and improve quality of life for elders and their loved ones. Demand for nursing beds continues to very much exceed capacity. Sylvia Richardson and Lefroy House work along with Ageing and Disability Services, Community Health and the Department of Health, and BHB's [Bermuda Hospitals Board] social work team to prioritise and fill the vacant beds as they become available.

Madam Chairman, internal projects are underway at Lefroy House to provide and/or improve the recreational area for elders and to optimise the current space. Works have commenced to replace the roof and address other much-needed internal renovations to the kitchen, dining and storage areas, including a new staff lounge. Construction in these areas will continue into the 2023/24 budget year.

As Lefroy House is an old facility, though, plans to build a new Lefroy House at a new location which were mothballed during the pandemic are being revisited by the Department of Health.

This ends my presentation on the business units of section 2201, Community Health.

Oral Health

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimate for the Department of Health, Oral Health, section 2202, is \$1,492,000. It comprises the business units of 32150, Oral Health Control; 32155, Oral Health Administration; and 32160, Oral Health Prevention on page B-155.

Madam Chairman, the Oral Health section provides comprehensive public health dental services to Bermuda's children and seniors aged 65 years and older. Our service is based on high quality patient-centred care, including dental examinations, consultations, preventative and dental hygiene appointments, as well as a range of restorative clinical treatments including extractions and fillings. There is an overall strong emphasis on prevention and working with our community,

and we also offer emergency service during regular working hours.

The school-based programmes are an essential part of the Oral Health section's service. Oral health education is offered to our school children along with a school-based fluoride supplementation programme for children aged six months up to 11 years of age.

This ends my remarks on section 2202, Oral Health.

The Chairman: Senator, just a time check. You have about 45 minutes remaining.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I am sure we will have some time for questions.

Central Laboratory

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimates for the Health Department's Central Laboratory section, 2204, are listed as business units 32200, Forensic Analysis; and 32220, Water and Food Analysis on page B-155. The estimates are \$741,000 and \$559,000, respectively, for a total of \$1,300,000. Central Laboratory's budget in 2023/24 will increase by \$28,000. The largest drivers for this increase are additional funds required for laboratory supplies, import duties, preventative maintenance contracts for equipment and increased electricity bills.

Madam Chairman, the Central Government Laboratory [CGL] provides a wide range of analytical services divided between two programmes; namely, the Forensic programme and the Food and Water programme. The Forensic programme performs seized drug and toxicology analysis. The drug cases submitted to the laboratory have been increasingly complex, in addition to an increased number of items associated with each case. This has been as a result of increased submissions due to several successful police raids.

There is an increase in the number of cannabis-derived products in the form of cosmetics and male enhancements. And there has also been an increase in cases containing the newest form of THC; namely, Delta-8 THC. While Delta-8 THC is considerably less potent than Delta-9 THC, it must be noted that scientifically it has been shown to have psycho-active properties on the body and should not be considered a safe alternative.

Additionally, there has been an increase in powder submissions which contain unusual mixtures of cocaine, heroin and fentanyl. The varying forms of products, together with the differing types of compounds, has put an increased demand on the laboratory as the analysis for these items is more time consuming and complex. It should also be noted that the powder mixture of cocaine, heroin and fentanyl is a very worrying trend and public health threat.

Madam Chairman, toxicology analysis is performed on coroner's cases, cases of driving under the

influence, and urine analysis for stakeholder agencies. The compounds that are routinely tested for are the common drugs of abuse in Bermuda, which include cannabis, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and fentanyl. There has been a steady year on year increase of cases submitted to the laboratory and this year has been no different. The 2022/23 year saw an increase of 16 per cent in the number of cases submitted to the laboratory when compared to the previous year.

Madam Chairman, the Water and Food Analysis Programme performs analytical testing of potable [which is drinking] and non-potable water samples, dairy products and food. It is primarily a laboratory support service to Environmental Health, with the results used to identify bacteriological and chemical risk to human health and animal health. It is through this collaboration that the Department of Health can maintain a low incidence in water and foodborne disease.

It is noteworthy, Madam Chairman, that the water quality of our main bathing beaches met the United States Environmental Protection Agencies guidelines value every week through our routine seawater testing.

It should be noted that the World Health Organization [WHO] has recommended the global elimination of trans-fatty acids by 2023. The Water and Food Analysis programme collaborated with the Port Health Unit to commence a baseline survey to determine the amounts of trans-fatty acids in various food samples in Bermuda.

Madam Chairman, it is anticipated that sampling for this baseline survey will finish by 31 March 2023. The first batch of results positively demonstrated that zero food samples contained two grams of fat, trans-fatty acids per 100 grams of food, a limit that is set by PAHO [Pan American Health Organization]. This project is supported by the United Kingdom's Health Security Agency (or UKHSA).

Dairy products are tested monthly to determine that they meet legislated limits as set out in the Public Health (Milk and Dairy Farm) Regulations 1952. Food testing is currently performed when there is a suspected case of foodborne illness.

This ends my remarks for section 2204, Central Laboratory.

Environmental Health

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget estimates for section 2203, Environmental Health, of the Department of Health, listed on page B-155 as business units 32170, Institutional Hygiene; 32171, Public Health Nuisance; 32172, Food and Beverage Safety; 32173, Water and Sanitary Engineering Control; 32175, Environmental Health Administration; 32180, Housing Conditions; 32270, Occupational Safety and Health; 32285, Port Health; and 32190, Vector Control are a combined \$3,960,000.

Madam Chairman, the Environmental Health section is an essential service providing monitoring, investigative and regulatory functions in such diverse areas as food safety, occupational safety, nuisance control, water quality, tobacco control and vector control. Environmental Health is implementing a new data system which will help to organise and store data in a form that is readily accessible. The upgrading of policy and procedures for the new system is underway.

In 2023/24, Environmental Health staff will focus on publicity, education and promotion to raise the profile of Environmental Health, informing the public of the wide range of responsibilities and activities within the section. Also, new pesticide regulations, Madam Chairman, are currently being developed inclusive of stakeholder consultation. Draft regulations are expected in 2023/24 for this Throne Speech initiative.

Madam Chairman, the Occupational Safety and Health office inspects places of work throughout the Island, investigates serious workplace accidents and ensures Bermuda's workers safety through development of policies and procedures such as the requisite training and permit system for asbestos abatement. In 2022/23, the programme of proactive workplace inspections recommenced to ensure compliance with regulations and that safety committees are established and operational. Industry outreach collaboration with employer organisations and work education and awareness activities are underway to raise the profile of safety at work, thereby improving standards.

Progress with ticketing for high-risk contraventions and re-establishment of the Advisory Council for Safety and Health are key priorities for 2023/24. Madam Chairman, the Port Health Unit assists in the monitoring of persons arriving on Island at the airport and other ports of entry in order to provide controls against any infectious diseases arriving on Island from overseas. This includes carrying out inspections of cruise ships and other vessels visiting the Island. The unit also monitors food products arriving on Island to ensure that they are safe for human consumption. The port health function facilitates Bermuda's compliance with international health regulations.

Vector Control

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, Vector Control is the team that ensures that threats of rodent-borne and mosquito-borne diseases do not manifest themselves in Bermuda. Residents are reminded, however, that the best way to limit rodent numbers is to deny rodents access to food sources such as garbage by using metal trash containers with lids and not putting trash out on non-pickup days.

To reiterate this important message, the department will continue with communications outreach in the upcoming year along with having Vector Control staff participate in education programmes such as Ministry fairs and career days.

This ends, Madam Chairman, my presentation on section 2203, Environmental Health.

Revenues

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, revenues for the Department of Health are projected to reach \$3,606,000 for 2023/24. These estimates, Madam Chairman, can be found on page B-156.

These revenues come from the sale of medications, vaccines and biologicals, fees for clinical services, patient fees from the two long-term care facilities, as well as fees for licences and permits issued by the Environmental Health Section of the Department [of Health].

Madam Chairman, there are several vacancies throughout the Department of Health. The senior management team of the department is working with Management Consulting Services and the Department of Employee and Organizational Development to build back better. The impact of the pandemic cannot be overstated, nor can the competition for nurses and other medical professionals internationally. However, we are taking a strategic approach to assessing services and programmes in light of the Bermuda Health Strategy 2022–2027 of which universal health coverage forms a part in placing our population's health needs first.

Madam Chairman, this concludes my remarks on Head 22, Department of Health.

As I close you can see that the mandate of the Ministry of Health is wide-ranging. We are lucky to benefit from the dedication, hard work, expertise and experience of a broad range of health and business professionals. Their commitment to public health is unwavering, despite deep challenges with resources, the growing health needs of our ageing population and, of course, despite the impact of such an incredible national health emergency on our ability to deliver public health services. With that said, we look forward to collaborating with the wider health system participants as we progress changes which will strengthen our health system and achieve the Ministry's vision for healthy people in healthy communities.

Madam Chairman, this concludes my budget brief for the Ministry of Health, Head 21, Ministry of Health Headquarters and Head 22, the Department of Health. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

We have until 12:04. Would any Senator wish to speak on these heads?

Senator Tucker.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And also thank you to the Junior Minister for a very comprehensive and informative brief this morning.

Before I start asking my questions, I would like to first of all thank—and I want to sincerely, sincerely

thank all of the health care workers who have come through . . . you know, their job is difficult on a regular day and so certainly in the last couple of years having dealt with COVID-19 and now with things diminishing, although we know that COVID-19 has not completely left us, but they have a very difficult job. And so I do want to say thank you. Their efforts . . . I mean, other people have said it. And their efforts have not gone unnoticed and unappreciated. So, I want to say thank you to them.

My first question, Madam Chairman, comes from page B-149, business unit 2101, General. The line item is 31000, General Administration. For 2022/23 the original budget amount for General Administration was \$2,732,000. The revised figure was \$3,410,000, which represents a \$678,000 spend for 2022/23. I do remember that in the Junior Minister's presentation she did say that \$55,000 was allotted to the SART nurses. But I would like to know if she could provide an explanation for the remainder of the increased funds, what they are allocated to be used for.

The second question comes from page B-150, Subjective analysis of current account estimates, under Salaries. The 2023/24 budget estimate is \$2,044,000, representing a \$234,000 decrease from the original budgeted amount. Given that there is an increase in full-time employee headcount by two staff, can the Junior Minister please provide clarity around the anticipated salary expense in this line item? Just so that I can sort of connect the dots. We have a decrease in the salary amount, but an increase in full-time employees. Relatedly, Madam Chairman, I would like to know how much of the Salaries line item is allocated to pay the salaries for the MDL lab staff.

The next question, Madam Chairman, comes from page B-150, still under Head 21. Page B-150 subjective analysis of current account estimates from Professional Services. Can the Junior Minister confirm if any expenses included in this line item were specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, and included in last year's budget, although COVID-19 remains applicable, in some regard as I mentioned a minute ago? But I would like to know how much of the Professional Services' budgeted amount is still allocated to COVID-19 initiatives going forward.

A question from page B-151, Employee Numbers. Given that two new positions have been added, can the Minister confirm also how many vacant and funded posts there are and if there are any vacant but unfunded posts in the Ministry Headquarters?

One more question from this head. And that would be on page B-[153], Performance Measures, business unit 31030, Health Care Registration and Regulation. The second line from the top of the section, Timely submission of quarterly reporting to INCB (the International Narcotics Control Board), which has responsibility for monitoring and supporting compliance with the International Drug Control Treaties. (That is based on the research that I did.) This was a new

measure in 2020/21. Can the Junior Minister tell us if Bermuda has met the reporting deadline for 2022? And if not, when was the most recent report sent?

Now I will just ask two questions from Head 22, and I will give everybody else an opportunity who wants to speak. From Head 22, I would like to ask the Junior Minister if she can tell us the anticipated staffing structure for the Mangrove Bay Clinic. And given that there was a shortage of health care providers worldwide, whether any staffing sourcing has already begun. If it has begun, if she can also tell us what positions have already begun to be sourced?

And the last question at this time that I would like to ask from Head 22 comes from page B-158, Performance Measures, business unit 32000. That is Lefroy [Care Community] and combined with 32015, Sylvia Richardson [Care Facility]. I have just combined those because the question applies to both. The third line from the top in each business unit, "Percentage of incidents resulting in hospitalization, significant harm or injury to the elder (includes errors, falls and omissions)," the target outcome for 2023/24 for Lefroy House is 10 per cent, and Sylvia Richardson is 5 per cent.

Can the Junior Minister tell us the number of occurrences of hospitalisations due to falls and so on (what I have mentioned) in each facility during the last fiscal year? What is that number? So we can put these percentages into perspective.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. That is it for now.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Senator Wight.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

When looking at the Health Ministry's budget for the forthcoming year, in fact every Ministry that we review, we always discuss the budget for the coming year versus the budget for the past year. What I often like to do is to review what actually took place in the past year, because I think that is a better indication really of what the budget should be for the forthcoming year rather than what the budget was prepared as over a year ago.

So on page B-148, when I look at the current expenditures for the coming year of \$199 million, I note that this is about \$14 million less than the current year, in fact, if I go to the prior year that is again about \$14 million less than the forthcoming year. So that got me thinking. That is an unusual situation to be in, because we would expect expenditures for the forthcoming year to be probably more so, not less, than the past years.

So doing a little bit of digging, I reviewed page B-166, which actually refers to the patient subsidies that come out of the Ministry of Health. And, Madam Chairman, this refers to those in our community less fortunate than we are, the indigent, the aged, the youth for both inpatient subsidies and outpatient subsidies.

And by reviewing the actual figures paid out in the current year versus what we expect to pay out to all of these individuals in the forthcoming year, there is an \$11 million shortfall, or decrease, which strikes me as being really unusual.

We heard from the Junior Minister in her brief discussion on the community health expenditures that they expect the medical supplies to be more expensive in the coming year. So why would Government expect payments for the indigent, the aged and the youth for both inpatient and outpatient for the forthcoming year to be \$11 million less than the current year? So that is my first question, Madam Chairman.

My second question which relates to the hospitals is last week we were presented with the audited financial statements for the hospital for the March 31, 2018 year. And when I reviewed those financial statements, I saw that they were actually signed off by the Auditor General in March of 2021. So my question to Government is, Why did they wait two years to present those financial statements to these Chambers? We know that the hospital is a contentious and a very concerning facility in our community.

So first question is, Why did it take two years for those audited financial statements that were prepared and ready for presentation two years ago to be presented? And my follow-up question is, If we know that those 2018 financial statements were ready, are the March 31, 2019, financial statements or any more recent year, have those been audited in their entirety by the Auditor General? And if so, why have they not been presented to these Chambers?

So, Madam Chairman, those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Wight.

Would any other Senator—I see Senator De Couto, I think.

Sen. Dr. Douglas De Couto: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I did want to follow up on the questions of staffing. It is probably related. At page B-157, Head 22, I see that the total number of budgeted staff, full-time equivalents, is 290 which although only plus-five, or 2 per cent, from the last year's budget is in fact 50-plus people. Frankly, I find it unlikely that these will manage to be higher, and I would like to understand the specific plans to do that successfully. That is one question.

Madam Chairman, also on page B-155, also Head 22, in the Environmental Health, I see several areas, Food & Beverage Safety, Water & Sanitary Eng. Control (it looks like) and Housing Conditions. I assume that is some kind of inspections. Those have been set to zero. What can we learn about where those functions are happening now? Or have they been ceased?

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Would any other Senator care to speak to these heads?

Senator Hodgson, are you in a position to address any of the questions posed?

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: I can answer as the information is received.

Just to respond to Senator Wight's questions concerning the hospital, I do want to make it clear that the hospital, the details will be found under Head 24. We are not debating Head 24 today, so I am not going to go down the hole of responding to those questions in particular.

Senator Tucker had asked a question about the vacant funded posts as well as the vacant unfunded posts. And there are 54 vacant funded posts, as well as 11 vacant but unfunded posts.

And again, if you were to explore, I guess, the increase in expenditures, if you looked at Head 24 in the hospitals, we would be able to provide some clarity around that. There was a question about the professional services specific to COVID-19 and how much are we going forward related to COVID-19? The answer is that COVID-19 funds are now under Health Disaster Coordination at \$158,000. So there would be none carried out besides, I guess, the Health Disaster Coordinator.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Senator Tucker.

Sen. Robin Tucker: May I just ask a follow-up question?

The Chairman: Yes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Okay. So the follow-up question is as it relates to the funded and unfunded positions. I would like to know, especially given the fact that as was mentioned in the brief there have been some resource issues in various areas, so I would like to know what positions are funded and remain vacant? And if we can get some information about the plan to source those positions, because obviously the people who have been . . . all of the hands that have been on deck during COVID-19 and all of that, certainly there is a level of stress and burnout and all of that. So I would like to know if more people are coming online to assist and alleviate some of that.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Tucker.
Senator Hodgson.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I guess along that same vein I will touch specifically on the question Senator Tucker just asked. But

regarding the Mangrove Bay Clinic, there is recruitment, obviously, that will take place. And I have actually gotten a list of some of the ongoing open recruitments. So right now we are looking at one occupational therapist, one physiotherapist, one trainee physiotherapist, 11 nursing associates (although not to staff Mangrove Bay in particular) and one dental hygienist. And it is also worth noting that the sustainable way to move forward is essentially to rotate staff. But we will of course go through the recruitment processing efforts.

And there are some additional posts that we will be advertising in the next few months. And those include nutritionists and health nurses, a dental officer, a trainee dental assistant and community health nurses as well.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman, can I ask a follow-up on that?

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you. Thank you to the Junior Minister for providing that information.

I guess relatedly, my question comes as it relates to rotating staff, because then does that not leave . . . if she can sort of let us know what gaps that will leave in terms of . . . we are bringing online another clinic. We already have a shortage of resources. So if we are rotating staff, then does that not result in gaps and perhaps diminished service in some areas?

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Senator Hodgson, over to you.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: What I can say as noted in my presentation is that the Ministry is working with the Department of Employee and Organization Development to best fill the vacancies that currently exist. The reality is that the Mangrove Bay Clinic will not be open immediately, and we are looking at another two years. So fortunately for us this is not an immediate problem. But I trust that we will be able to work with the issues in order to best provide services to the wider public.

It is also worth noting that in this next fiscal year the department is putting a lot of emphasis toward focusing on succession planning, given the fact that we do have an ageing workforce. And this includes the development of their current employees, which is exciting, you know, the opportunity to advance into leadership positions throughout the department.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman, if I may.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you.

Thank you to the Junior Minister for answering that question. I guess I should sort of anchor it to an earlier response that was given in terms of the 54

funded but vacant positions, because, again, we have a resource issue in our health care systems, clearly. So if the Junior Minister can speak more specifically to how and what the plan is in terms of filling and sourcing those positions, I would be most grateful. Thank you.

The Chairman: I also see Senator De Couto.

Sen. Dr. Douglas De Couto: Hi, Madam Chairman.

I would actually like to pick up Senator Wight's question, and I am probably going to recast it in a way that I hope you will find permissible for this debate. I know that we have selected some heads, but I am sure that anything that is on the Ministry overview page would be well within debate. I think we ought to be able to ask questions about anything on that page.

My question would be, given that last year they were \$9 million over budget, how should we feel that the Ministry will magically . . . Let me rephrase that. I am not very optimistic. I have heard things in the debate today that make me think that the same kind of going-over-budget will not happen again. And I would like to understand, what was the driver of that going over budget? And what plans will there be to reduce the likelihood of that happening in the next year? Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator De Couto.

Any other?

Senator Hodgson, over to you.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: What I will say, Madam Chairman, is that generally speaking we can all appreciate that the Ministry was over budget due to COVID-19 expenses. I will not go any further than that.

There were some questions about Lefroy and Sylvia Richardson. And I can confirm that there were no falls for Lefroy House, although I do just want to confirm for Sylvia Richardson.

To Senator Tucker's question about the positions that are vacant at this time, I think it is worth noting that we actually have relief community health nurses, as well as service providers who assist with the shortfall that can be experienced.

The Chairman: Senator Wight.

Sen. John Wight: Just a follow-up to my question before about the subsidies, I am just hearing the Junior Minister refer to COVID-19. The \$11 million that I referred to as being a reduction in the forthcoming year's subsidy relative to last year's current was both a combination of inpatient and outpatient and indigent, aged and youth. So the difference could not be attributable to COVID-19 for \$11 million. So I guess my concern, my question still remains.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Wight.

[Pause]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: To respond to Senator Wight's question about the revised estimate of \$123 million and the difference, it is worth noting that the \$123 million actually includes the supplementary \$15 million of additional funding that was provided to satisfy the Government commitment on the Bermuda Hospitals Board's funding model. So there isn't such a difference in the numbers, as indicated.

[Pause]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: And just to finish on the response to Senator Tucker, there were three falls recorded at Sylvia Richardson Care Facility. I am working to get the information pertaining to the INCB performance measure. I have not forgotten.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman, may I ask another question?

The Chairman: Yes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you.

So this question comes from page B-150, the subjective analysis of current account estimates, Professional Services. So the 2023/24 budget estimate is \$3,401,000, representing a \$4,095,000 decrease from the original budget amount for 2022/23. Before getting to the core of my question, I would like to give a little bit of context.

The spending trend on this line item appears just a bit inconsistent, so I would like to get some clarity. I looked back at the budget books from 2017/18 to the present. And in each reporting year the original budgeted amounts are significantly lower than the actual spend. So 2022/23 is an exception because the actual spend has not been reported yet for obvious reasons. But the revised figure is there, so the trend is pretty clear.

I initially thought that the overages may have been due to the pandemic, which is why I looked back at the prior books. I looked at, as I said, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 to compare. And of course the same trend persists. The original budget estimates are significantly different from the actual.

Can the Junior Minister explain the reason that the amounts spent in the line item are consistent and significantly higher than the original budget estimates? I really would like to know whether the original budget request amounts are realistic, given the trend that is observed. So that is in anticipation of any expenditure for professional services.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Senator Hodgson, we have about eight minutes remaining.

[Pause]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, there were some further questions from Senator Tucker regarding the Professional Services line item. And the Professional Services line item essentially covers the consultants. It will fund the universal health coverage expenses. And if you would have noted, as you mentioned for 2021/22, the original estimates, the prior estimates included the contract for the pandemic response IT systems and resQwest which are not being needed after the 31st of March.

And there was a supplemental on funding over \$3.8 million that increased that number substantially, previously.

The Chairman: I see Senator Tucker. There are about five minutes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you to the Junior Minister for that answer.

Just on the back of that, I thank her for the information provided that is more current. But again, it is the trend of low budgeting and then the consistent overspend that is the broader issue. So if there could be some response in terms of why that is. There could be some legitimate reason why. So it would just be helpful to understand so we can know what is happening even going forward as to whether there is a reason for that.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[Pause]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: What I can say, I guess, [wearing] my Junior Minister of Finance hat is that in this budget cycle we talked about a reset. And so a reset to realistic spending numbers, realistic (I guess) needs for departments. So going forward . . . I cannot speak to what happened previously and perhaps I will do my own digging for that understanding, but going forward we are just looking to cover the expected needs literally in this budget season.

Generally speaking, the reason we found ourselves overspending was, I guess, the entire experience of going through a pandemic and trying to figure out the right response to COVID-19. So as you said, it might not be a bad particular reason that these things occurred. But we are looking to ensure that the budget targets that we have set are realistic for the upcoming fiscal year.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes, Senator Tucker.

Sen. Robin Tucker: I just want to say thank you to the Junior Minister for her response. And I just want to point out that when she does have a look, if she can look back at prior years because the question will probably come up again.

[Laughter]

Sen. Robin Tucker: Because there is a consistent trend. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: I will make sure to have that answer, Senator Tucker.

And again, just trying to confirm the answers regarding the INCB performance measure. I do know that typically and historically we meet the deadlines, but I do want to confirm with the office.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Madam Chairman, can I just . . .

The Chairman: Absolutely, Senator Tucker. Two minutes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you.

I just want to sort of get a little follow-up as it relates to the INCB, just based on the Junior Minister's response just a second ago. Because I noted that, again from the performance measures, the 2023/24 book in 2021/22 the actual outcome on that performance measure in terms of the reporting to the International Narcotics Control Board was deferred. And in 2022 the original forecast was 75 per cent and the target outcome for 2023/24 is 50 per cent. So I want to know why the quarterly reporting was deferred in 2021/22 and also why the measure for 2023/24 was reduced from 75 [per cent] to 50 per cent?

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: And we have one minute remaining. It is 12:03 by the clock that I am using. And so there are 60 seconds remaining.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Senator Hodgson.

[Pause]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam Chairman, in the interest of time I will endeavour to provide those responses at a later date.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Senator Tucker and my other colleagues who have been able to . . . in today's debate.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Hodgson, for that indication. And the time for debate having now passed, Senator, would you like to move these heads?

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Yes, Madam Chairman.

I move that Heads 21 and 22 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Is there any objection?

No objection.

These heads are so moved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Health Heads 21 and 22 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2023/24.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Hodgson.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: For the listening audience, I will now get up and hand over the seat to my Senate colleague, Senator John Wight, who will deal with the Committee debates for the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport.

[Sen. John Wight, Chairman]

The Chairman: We can now start with the Ministry under consideration, being the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport. We are looking to have presented Head 71 found on page B-238 regarding the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport Headquarters; and Head 20 on page B-241 regarding Youth, Sport and Recreation.

So the time right now is 12:10 on the clock in the Chamber.

The Clerk: The correct time is 12:06.

The Chairman: Thank you, 12:06 is the correct time.

So we will go until 12:30 and then recess until two o'clock. The number of hours allocated to these heads is two. The Senator or in this case the Minister in charge is Minister Darrell.

So, Minister, how would you wish to proceed?

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

I move that the Committee now do take under consideration Head 71, the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport Headquarters; as well as Head 20, Youth, Sport and Recreation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Please proceed.

MINISTRY OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present the financial year 2023/24 estimates of revenue and expenditure for the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, which can be found starting on page B-237 of the Estimates Book. Mr. Chairman, I will briefly

discuss this Ministry as a whole, following with information for Head 71, the Ministry Headquarters, and then detail the departments that fall under the Ministry, which are Head 20, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, as well as Head 52, the Department of Culture.

Mr. Chairman, the mission of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport is *To develop and celebrate our people*. I truly believe that the uniqueness of our people and our culture is the country's greatest asset. Our values, our strength and our resilience are everything that make Bermuda the incredible country that it is today. And our Ministry is committed to developing and celebrating our people.

Mr. Chairman, before I get into the details of the budget, I want to share with the Senate some of the success of 2022 for my Ministry. The launch of the National Sports Policy, which was a 2021 Throne Speech commitment, provides a roadmap for this Government to raise the value of sport in Bermuda and to increase participation and regional success over the next five years. The policy outlines steps needed to create an environment supporting consistent excellence in sport and underscoring the central role of sport in our society. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation are primarily responsible for the implementation of the policy and will work collaboratively with the National Sports Governing Bodies and other stakeholders.

Looking back on the last year, Mr. Chairman, I also wish to highlight the very welcome return of the Bermuda Day Heritage Day Parade in its regular format. As you know, Mr. Chairman, the first Bermuda Day Parade was held in 1979. And it was designated specifically to unite the community, and it remains an integral celebration of the Island and its people. The Bermuda Day festivities are a vibrant celebration winding through Hamilton full of music, culture and a patriotic pride. Showcasing culture at its very best, the parade features dance groups, bands, majorettes, decorated floats and Gombey troupes.

Mr. Chairman, while the traditional floats harken back to the Easter Parade using natural materials, the new categories have been introduced to highlight modern art and the creative works of Bermudian float builders. Children showcase their hours of rehearsal from dance schools. Community groups walk alongside a banner and are cheered from the sidelines, and hundreds of people dance in the streets as Gombey rhythms carry them forward united as Bermudians. Truly, Mr. Chairman, Bermuda Day is a family-oriented day, and it celebrates our Island home and the cultures within it.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry continued to support the production of the Clyde Best film. The overall aim of this initiative is to produce a feature, a 90-minute documentary film, on the Bermudian football legend Clyde Best. This film will give a first-hand look at overcoming racial discrimination in sport through the lens of a barrier-breaking player. Clyde Best [is well] known for

being the first Black role model in English football. He is a Bermudian native who played 221 games for West Ham United Football Club from 1968 to 1976, scoring 58 goals as a striker and in the process became one of the trailblazing non-White footballers in the 1970s in the UK and in the United States. Mr. Chairman, the objective of this initiative is to distribute the film on a major worldwide streaming platform and film festivals.

Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity to attend the second World Anti-Doping Association (also known as WADA) Forum held for the Ministers responsible for Sport in the Caribbean. It was held on the 26th to the 27th of January in Kingston, Jamaica. Mr. Chairman, I attended with Ms. Debbie Jones-Hunter, who is the CEO of the Bermuda Sports Anti-Doping Authority (also known in Bermuda as BSADA). Mr. Chairman, the intent of the second WADA forum is to follow up on issues raised at the inaugural, which included the following:

- to clarify and define a plan of action for the advancement of strong anti-doping programmes in the region including testing, education and capacity building;
- to receive reports from member countries on measures that will be taken in respective countries toward strengthening their programmes; and
- [to identify] areas in which WADA may support member countries.

Mr. Chairman, delegates including myself and CEO Jones-Hunter were able to tour Jamaica's Anti-Doping Commission's facilities including the mobile unit that they have, which is one of a kind in the Caribbean and the second in the world. Mr. Chairman, this event provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen our engagement in sport with the region. The benefits of learning more about anti-doping issues will prove critical as we continue to strive to raise the game of clean sport.

Mr. Chairman, as you would also know, I recently returned from Argentina where I attended the International Cricket Council (ICC) Qualifiers held from February 25 through 28. As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, Bermuda also has won the bid to host the ICC 2024 Men's T20 World Cup America Qualifiers in this year, September.

As the Government's ambassador for sports, this travel allowed me the opportunity, along with Bermuda's first female Director of Youth, Sport and Recreation, Ms. K. [Kimberly] Charryse Bean, to

- assess the regional ICC event on display;
- engage with key officials and administrators to gain further insight into the process required to stage an ICC event; and
- signal to ICC executives that Bermuda is committed to presenting cricket at a globally exceptional level.

Mr. Chairman, I would say that my presence at these matches underscored Government's commitment to supporting the Bermuda Cricket Board in delivering a first-class final World Cup qualifying tournament in Bermuda. Furthermore, it highlights the Ministry's pledge to enhance the development of sport on the Island.

Ministry Priorities for 2023/24

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk about some of the Ministry's priorities for this upcoming fiscal year. Next year the Ministry intends to continue to develop and celebrate our people through a variety of initiatives. We recognise the value of sport in our country and continue to explore avenues that will promote Bermuda as a sporting jurisdiction.

Mr. Chairman, the Bermuda Football Association [the BFA] has confirmed it is set to host the Concacaf Nations League match that will take place this Saturday, March 25, against Guyana at the Flora Duffy South Field Stadium. Such international sporting events can assist in bringing much-needed revenue to the Island.

Mr. Chairman, as indicated earlier, the Government is supporting the Bermuda Cricket Board who are hosting the International Cricket Council (ICC) 2024 Men's T20 World Cup America qualifiers in September. Not only will this event bring a spotlight to Bermuda as a locale for sports tourism, it also puts us in the running to be considered as a first-class ICC training venue for our partners in the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

Mr. Chairman, it is clear from the realignment of funds in this upcoming fiscal year that the Government is demonstrating that it values the development of sport in Bermuda and that it values the development of young people. Mr. Chairman, there is increased funding for our very popular Summer Day Camp and After-school Programmes. This will help in increasing the number of available spots for young people. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation is also providing investment grants this year to assist young people who wish to pursue their recreation passions in areas including art, oration, culinary arts, science, technology, engineering and math.

Mr. Chairman, during this upcoming fiscal year we will provide support to ensure that our athletes continue to dominate on the world stage, proving that a small population can create world-class sportsmen. In that regard, we are offering additional assistance to our elite and high-performing athletes. Mr. Chairman, in line with goal 2 of the Sports Policy, achieving sporting excellence regionally, our elite and high-performance athletes need to be prepared for international competition, and we are pleased to be able to allocate additional funds to this important Government priority despite our challenging fiscal environment.

Mr. Chairman, goal 5 of the Sports Policy, establishing a framework for talent development, focuses

on long-term athlete development, and the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation will be working with National Sports Governing Bodies so that athletes can reach their full potential. The department will continue to work on their leadership in the development of their long-term athletic development plans. The objective in this regard, Mr. Chairman, is to educate the National Sports Governing Bodies on the importance of long-term athletic planning and to encourage those organisations to think analytically about their sport and how it can be improved.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Culture has several initiatives planned, which include the creation of a short [film] series called "Gold Bermudians," which will highlight the accomplishments of Bermudians who have punched above their weight on the international stage, partnering with the Ministry of Education to provide "Tradition Bearers in Schools." This [will be a] programme where we will support a master artisan who will offer workshops to primary and middle school students.

Report on the Estimates Book

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, I would now like to draw your attention to page B-237 of the Estimates Book where you will note that the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport budget for the financial year 2023/24 is \$13,718,000. This is an increase of \$849,000, Mr. Chairman, or 7 per cent. Mr. Chairman, page B-237 shows that the revenue estimate for the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport is \$751,000. This is an increase of \$90,000, or 14 per cent, from the financial year 2022/23.

Mr. Chairman, page B-237 also details the current account expenditure of departments that make up the overall budget for the Ministry by head, as follows:

- Head 71—Ministry Headquarters, the estimate was \$1,273,000, and this year it will be \$1,168,000;
- Head 20—Youth Sport and Recreation, \$9,616,000. This year it will be \$10,659,000;
- Head 52—Culture, \$1,980,000. This year, \$1,891,000.

Mr. Chairman, the summary shows that for the upcoming year, Youth, Sport and Recreation saw an increase in their budget of 11 per cent, while Culture and the Ministry Headquarters saw decreases compared to the revised budgets of 2022/23 in order to reallocate the funds to Head 20. Mr. Chairman, this reallocation shows the Government's commitment to the sports and youth of our country. Enriching the lives of the community in areas of sport and recreation will bring people together and build unity. Sports remind us of what connects us and enhances our cultural integrity.

Mr. Chairman, as seen on page C-20, the grants and contributions budget across the Ministry is \$4,052,000, an increase of \$784,000. The grants and

contributions for the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport include [Head 20,] Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, which is \$3,619,000 for the development of young persons, increased funding for elite and high-performing athletes as well as sports development. This is an increase of \$773,000, or 27 per cent.

Well, Mr. Chairman, there has been a significant increase as it relates to the Youth and Sport budget. Sport is linked to culture, as is stated in our National Sports Policy. It brings joy. It promotes health, and it inspires national pride. This increase in realignment of funding is a testament to the Government's commitment to youth and sports in Bermuda.

Head 52, Department of Culture, \$328,000 for community and cultural affairs. This is a decrease of \$34,000, or 9 per cent. Much of the funding was reallocated to the Youth, Recreation and Sport, as there has been a cry in the community that not enough is being done.

Head 71, Ministry Headquarters, \$105,000 to support Parish Council commitments and to help support the Cup Match Classic.

Mr. Chairman, these grants to the community align with our mission to develop and celebrate our people.

HEAD 71—MINISTRY OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT HEADQUARTERS

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, I now turn to the current account expenditure for Head 71, the Ministry Headquarters.

Mr. Chairman, the financial year 2023/24 estimates of expenditure and revenue for Head 71, the Ministry Headquarters, are found on pages B-238 and B-239 of the Estimates Book. Page B-238 shows that the budget estimate for the Ministry Headquarters for fiscal year 2023/24 is \$1,167,714. This is \$104,191, or 8 per cent, lower than the original budget for the prior year due to the reallocation of funds to Head 20 to achieve some of the Ministry's strategic goals. The budget estimate includes \$45,000 for Cup Match grants which was transferred from the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry Headquarters comprises a single business unit, 81000, [Administration,] on page B-238, which supports the Minister's Office and the Ministry's Centralised Compliance and Accounts functions. The unit consists of eight full-time employees and salaries to provide these services essential to the Ministry's operations. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry Headquarters directs the development and implementation of policy and legislation, has overall responsibility for the management of the Ministry's budget and provides guidance on programming to the departments within the Ministry.

Through its centralised accounting section, the Ministry Headquarters provides accounting and financial management services to all departments under its

responsibility. The key activities of this department are to

- undertake strategic leadership of the Ministry's departments;
- manage the Ministry's accounts and ensure compliance with Financial Instructions;
- lead and operationalise policy and legislative developments;
- issue and manage ministerial grants aligned with the Ministry's mission; and
- appoint and oversee five boards and nine Parish Councils.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to the subjective analysis of the current account estimates found on page B-239. I would like to highlight certain line items in this section.

Salaries: The amount budgeted for salaries for the fiscal year 2023/24 is \$831,000 which represents an increase of \$15,000, or 2 per cent. The increase reflects the regrading of specific posts within the Ministry Headquarters.

Professional services: The amount budgeted for salaries for fiscal year 2023/24 is \$117,000 which represents a decrease of \$155,000, or 57 per cent. This decrease represents the reallocation of funds to the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation in order to enhance the financial support for young persons, elite and high-performing athletes, and sports development.

Grants and contributions: The amount budgeted for salaries *[sic]* for fiscal year 2023/24 is \$105,000 which represents an increase of \$45,000, or 75 per cent. (That is not salaries; sorry.) This increase reflects for the Cup Match grant which was transferred from the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry Headquarters performance measures are listed on page B-245. Our annual indicators reflect the administrative nature of the Headquarters' functions. We were able to complete one of the two compliance reviews intended for the year and three training sessions.

Lastly, we completed 100 per cent of the ministerial policy priorities for this fiscal year, namely, in the form of the aforementioned National Sports Policy and amendments to the Parish Councils Act.

Mr. Chairman, before closing I would like to take this opportunity to thank the small, however immensely dedicated team at the Ministry Headquarters for the work that they do in ensuring that the Ministry meets its mandate. It is headed by Permanent Secretary, Ms. Marva-Jean O'Brien; supported by Comptroller, Ms. Wendy Pond Hunt; and Policy Analyst, Ms. Jane Brett. The Ministry Headquarters is technically supported by the Director of Culture, Dr. Kim Dismont-Robinson; and the Director of Youth, Sport and Recreation, Ms. Kimberley Charryse Bean.

Mr. Chairman, as I look ahead we have much to look forward to. And our Ministry will continue to do what we can to ensure that our youth, cultural and

sports communities are celebrated supported and up-lifted. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry has a great role to play in the fabric of Bermudian society and the national identity by which we will continue to develop and celebrate our people in every way that we can.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my presentation for the fiscal year 2023/24 budgetary allocations for Head 71, the Ministry Headquarters. And after lunch I will move to Head 20, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Yes, for the benefit of Ministers and Senators and the listening audience, it is now 12:30. So we will break and reconvene again at two o'clock to complete the remaining Head 20.

Thank you.

Proceedings in Committee suspended at 12:30 pm

Proceedings in Committee resumed at 2:00 pm

[Sen. John Wight, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2023/24

MINISTRY OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

[Continuation thereof]

The Chairman: Good afternoon, listening audience. It is now two o'clock. We are resuming the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation. Minister Darrell before the lunch break had completed Head 71 on the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport Headquarters and will now start Head 20 on page B-241 relating to Youth, Sport and Recreation.

So, Minister, whenever you are ready. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. (Give me one second.)

[Pause]

HEAD 20—DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH, SPORT AND RECREATION

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, I will now present the fiscal year 2023/24 estimates of expenditure and revenue for Head 20, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, which can be found on pages B-241 to B-247 of the Estimates Book.

Mission Statement

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the mission statement of the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation is, *To develop Youth, Sport and Recreation through our services and to celebrate the accomplishments of our people.*

Department Objectives

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the objectives for 2023/24 are as follows:

- Provide funding and support for National Sports Governing Bodies.
- Provide funding and support for National Youth Organising Bodies.
- Manage and maintain government sports and recreation facilities.
- Provide After-School Programmes for school-age children.
- Provide Summer Day Camp Programmes for school-age children.
- Provide Out of School Programmes for school-age children.
- Prepare and manage the budget to ensure intended deadlines are met.
- Meet and fulfil the objectives of the two department policies: National Youth Policy and National Sport Policy.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation administers nine programmes and 21 business units for which a general summary can be found on pages B-242 and B-243 of the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue for fiscal year 2023/24. The budget allocation for the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation in fiscal year 2023/24 is \$10,658,764, an increase of \$1,042,461, or 11 per cent, as shown on page B-243.

Mr. Chairman, I will now discuss the individual programmes under Head 20.

Programme 2001—Administration

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for business unit 30045, General Administration, is \$839,429. The allocated funds provide for the administration and operation of the Youth, Sport and Recreation Department's Headquarters, which is located in Craig Appin House situated at 8 Wesley Street, Hamilton. In addition, the administrative section provides administrative support for eight programmes within the department and is responsible for monitoring departmental spending and ensuring that policies and procedures are adhered to in achieving efficiency and effectiveness.

Programme 2002—Sport Development

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the Sport Development Programme is operated through business unit 30055. The budget allocation is \$427,975, an increase of \$9,500, or a 2 per cent increase. This increase represents the funding allocated to assist National Sports Governing Bodies [NSGBs] with the development of their long-term athletic development plans. The NSGBs will participate in workshops the department will host over the next year, the long-term development of Goal 5 of our National Sport Policy.

The residual funds in business unit 30055, Sports Development, includes salaries at \$269,975, training, recreational services, supplies and other funds to ensure the efficient and effective administration of the sports programmes.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30065, Sports Investments, is dedicated to highlighting how the Bermuda Government invests in the community through sport. In 2022 the National Sports Policy was updated with a five-year promise to raise the value of sport with a new vision that "Sport Matters." To assist with the National Sports Policy, business unit 30065 has been allocated a total of \$2,259,000, an increase of \$773,000, or 52 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, the funds in this business unit are allocated to contributions to sports development which are investments to the National Sports Governing Bodies. The increased funding also offers additional assistance to elite athletes through special grants and provides increased free access to the National Sports Centre for national athletes and teams in advance of international competition. Additionally, this unit represents funding allocated for the hosting of the ICC T20 World Cup Final Qualifier which will be held in Bermuda from the 28th of September to the 8th of October 2023, and funding to the Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority, which is a statutory authority mandated for Bermuda to be able to compete internationally.

Mr. Chairman, during fiscal year 2023/24, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation intends to continue focusing on all aspects of sporting development and to work with various government agencies to maintain sporting and recreation facilities that fall under the department's remit.

Programme 2003—Sports Incentives and Awards

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the estimate for business unit 30030, Athletic Awards, is \$160,000. This represents the allocated funding for the Elite Athlete Assistance Programme and the National Junior Sponsorships Awards Programme. The funding will support junior athletes with important training and competition that will assist in developing them into elite athletes. The investment in sport incentives and recognition is vital for the continued development of sport in Bermuda. This business unit supports the achievement of these goals.

Programme 2004—Sports Facilities Management

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the budget estimate for business unit 30060, Sports Facilities Administration, is \$1,313,069. There is no change from 2022/23.

Mr. Chairman, the budget estimate for business unit 30060 primarily comprises funding for the National Sports Centre [NSC]. The National Sports Centre provides internationally certified facilities for sport training and competition, as well as a venue for recreation and entertainment. It is an essential part of the country's sporting infrastructure and entirely deserving of the funding designated for it to reflect the Government's commitment to sport development.

Mr. Chairman, the National Sports Centre continues to have financial concerns. Last year it was stated that the installation of an energy-saving microgrid system would assist in the critical financial recovery of the NSC. Unfortunately, the energy project has had a number of delays and is not complete. These delays include shipping, supplies, work permits and inclement weather. The Ministry still believes that the energy project when complete will make the NSC energy independent and will be a great benefit in the long run. The board and management are also still committed to correcting the audit deficiencies and are actively working with the Office of the Auditor General to do so.

Mr. Chairman, the remaining budget for the sports facilities business unit 30060 is dedicated to salaries and wages totalling \$194,269, and operational expenses.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30075, Michael Preece Softball Diamond, is allocated \$138,099. This represents an increase of \$2,000, a 1 per cent increase over the 2022/23 budget allocation. This allocation reflects the cost for industrial staff and funds to maintain and operate the softball park.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30080, WER Joell Tennis Stadium, is allocated \$421,477, a decrease of \$54, or less than 1 per cent, over the prior 2022/23 budget. This business unit provides funding for salaries and wages totalling \$337,177. The remainder of the funds will be used to maintain and operate the tennis stadium.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30090, the [Bermuda] Motorsport Park, is allocated \$8,000. The decrease of \$2,000 represents a reduction of 20 per cent from the 2022/23 budget. These funds are used for insurance, maintenance and water at the Motorsport Park.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30390, sports community fields, is allocated \$47,000. There is no change from 2022/23. The funds for this unit are allocated for the maintenance and operation of the community fields under the department's remit.

Programme 2005—Youth Development

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the allocated budget for fiscal year 2023/24 of \$415,306 is for two of the business units under the Youth Development Programme. Youth Development Administration, business unit 30210, has a budget allocation of \$315,306 for fiscal year 2023/24. The funding for this unit provides clerical and office support, administrative guidance and staffing for all programmes operated within the unit.

Mr. Chairman, the allocated budget for business unit 30350, Youth Investments and Grants, is \$100,000. These investments are vital and provide funding to youth service agencies working with young people. In addition to these investments, Mr. Chairman, the programme is responsible for overseeing and execution of the National Youth Policy. The working group of the policy have just completed its first year of implementation of the eight policy goals focusing on developing and empowering Bermuda's youth. The working group consists of officers from the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, representatives from the Bermuda Youth Parliament and other organisations with a focus on young people.

Programme 2006—Community Centres

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for three community centres fall under this department's remit, and it is \$1,394,577, a \$53,276 decrease, or 4 per cent, over the prior 2022/23 budget. The decrease represents a realignment of funds to assist with other programmes in the department.

The Community Centres' full-time employee count is 18 for fiscal year 2023/24. These staff facilitate a wide range of programming for seniors, adults and children, providing engagement and participation opportunities for families while promoting the philosophy for the department's mission.

The Eastern Zone Community Centre has a budget allocation of \$447,179. The Sammy Wilson Central Zone [Community] Centre has \$517,354, and the Western Zone Community Centre had \$430,044.

Mr. Chairman, the three community centres provide safe, structured programmes with trained staff and the opportunity to build positive and lasting relationships. The community centres' programming will provide a wide range of sports, recreational and social experiences year-round that reflect the needs and interests of the community. We will encourage community participation in positive programming that offers the community desirable and enjoyable alternatives. Residents and visitors of the community, both young and old, will be provided with the opportunity to work on special projects such as sporting events, cultural events, recreational and educational programmes and activities, and much more in a volunteer service role, thus promoting civic pride and unity in the community.

Programme 2007—Camping

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for the department's Camping Programme is \$940,381, a decrease of \$41,199. This decrease represents a realignment of funds to assist with other programming in the department [as follows]:

- Darrell's Island has been allocated \$311,240, a decrease of \$10,382, or 3 per cent;
- Paget Island, \$261,644, a decrease of \$10,182, or 4 per cent;
- Ports Island, \$106,547, a decrease of \$12,399, or a 10 per cent decrease; and
- White's Island, \$89,226, an increase of \$3,618, or 4 per cent increase.

The allocation for the camping provides for the staffing operation and administration and includes 10 full-time staff who maintain the facilities and marine equipment.

Programme 2008—School Age Activities / Summer Day Camps

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for Summer Day Camps is \$823,600, an increase of \$73,000, or 10 per cent. This increase supports providing assistance with the burden on working-class parents. The funding will see an increase in the number of obtainable placements for students in the Summer Day Camp Programme.

Mr. Chairman, this programme supports approximately 1,500 school-aged children and is provided in various schools throughout the Island. Approximately 130 part-time workers deliver this programme, supervised by qualified educators. There is also a special needs programme that provides care for children with exceptionalities.

Mr. Chairman, the camps in programme 2008 for preschool-age children were created specifically for the transition of children from pre-school to their first year of elementary school, primary school age children and middle school age children.

Programme 2009—After School Programmes

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, business unit 30125, previously After School Programme, is expanding to meet the needs of parents and guardians. The Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation maintains its commitment to keep young people safe and protected from harm. This cost centre has extended to provide out-of-school programmes during the mid-term breaks, infusing developmentally appropriate sports and recreation activities. In support of Bermuda School Reform, safe spaces and places with experiences (i.e., Career Exploration) that promote healthy social, emotional and physical growth are a key focus. This unit is slated to run a before-school programmes pilot in September 2024.

Mr. Chairman, this programme's budget allocation provides for staffing, communications, materials and supplies for 14 [youth] programmes. The budget allocation for business unit 30125, Youth Programme, for fiscal year 2023/24 is \$1,470,851, an increase of \$282,501, or 24 per cent. This increase supports providing additional spaces for young people in our programmes via the afterschool and out-of-school programmes.

Mr. Chairman, currently the Youth Programme supports approximately 450 preschool, primary and middle school aged children across 14 facilities, and employs 61 seasonal workers along with two full-time senior supervisors.

Performance Measures

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the performance measures for the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation can be found on pages B-245 through B-247.

For business unit 30030, Athletic Awards, an average of \$3,000 was awarded to each [of 17 Junior Athletes] participating. This year saw Trey Mallory become the inaugural Flora Duffy Award recipient, and he was awarded \$10,000 toward his pursuit of excellence in the sport of tennis.

Mr. Chairman, the Department requires all National Sporting Governing Bodies to be certified. To date, 25 National Sports Governing Bodies are registered with the department. Thirteen of the registered NSGBs have received funds to assist with the development of their sports which include athlete, coaching and administrative development.

Mr. Chairman, during the Annual Sports Awards, which was held in-person for the first time in two years, 30 awards were presented. It was a wonderful evening for all who attended to celebrate sports excellence with Dame Flora Duffy and Jah-Nhai Perinchief crowned Sports Persons of the Year.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30075, the WMC Preece Softball Park. As the Island gradually returns to some resemblance of normalcy, the use of the facility has started to increase. The softball diamond saw an average of 220 persons utilise the facility per month during the season.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30080, WER Joell Tennis Stadium, the average monthly use was lower, down from 300 down to 220 persons using the facility each month. This was due to the damage of the light fixtures during the hurricanes. This forced the facility to close early when daylight was limited and drove down the number of participants playing tennis. The repairs to this facility are ongoing, materials have been sourced and the lighting project should be completed by April of this year.

Mr. Chairman, for business unit 30090, as the Island is learning to live with COVID-19, use and participation have improved at the Motorsport Park. After

the restrictions were eased Island-wide, the facility came back to life with participants enjoying its use again.

Mr. Chairman, business units 30120, 30130, and 30146, the Community Centres. The number of attendees continues to increase from the prior year, from 35,000 to 40,000. This again is due to the Island opening back up safely after the pandemic. We are pleased with this improvement, thanks to programming enhancements, but we also recognise that it was lower than originally forecast at 50,000. Unfortunately, this was due to the pandemic and the lockdowns and restrictions which limited the facilities' use at the beginning of the year. A bright highlight was that the programmes delivered, increased to 30, more than the original target of 28.

Mr. Chairman, business unit 30125, Youth Programmes for the department, increased its average number of participants from the prior year despite the pandemic. The aggressive target of 450 students was met and rose slightly to 455. The After School Programmes and Clubs operate on the same schedules as the public schools, and this year the introduction of the Out of School Programme, which ran while schools were on break, helped to ensure that working parents had another resource for childcare.

Mr. Chairman, business units 30150, 30160, 30165, 30170, Camping Facilities, continued to see a rise in the number of campers. The programme exceeded its performance target of 1,600 [increasing] to 1,932. The camping section received increased requests for our camping facilities. As the Island opened up entirely from the pandemic our number of users increased. Notably, the user-experience measures reached 100 per cent satisfaction for 2022/23. The department is very pleased to be able to serve the country in this way, providing safe, fun and local recreation and holidays.

Mr. Chairman, in business unit 30180, Day Camps, there was a decrease in the camping participants from 1,600 to 1,435. This decrease was due to the number of COVID-19 cases spiking during the programme's operations. Although the target outcome was not reached, the user satisfaction was 93 per cent, with 95 per cent of users saying that they are going to use the programme again.

Mr. Chairman, from the evidence of our performance measures, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation was able to have a successful year delivering valuable well-received programmes to the community.

Year in Review

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, the National Youth Policy Working Group has completed a year. Tasked with developing a working plan to meet the goals, they met on a monthly basis, as well as sub-committee meetings in between. Across government

departments, key stakeholders, third sector organisations and members of the general public have all been engaged in research and deliberation. The first annual report will convey the way forward.

Mr. Chairman, the youth section launched the Out of School Programme: Summer. This specialised programme supports the tenets of the National Youth Policy—empowering young people to express themselves in the area of the arts, sports, environment and civic engagement. With expert facilitators, trained actors, camping leaders and sports coaches, the department is committed to ensuring that the potential of every child can be explored through affordable experiences. The department is committed to providing quality youth programmes for preschool, primary and middle school aged children, ensuring safe and structured recreational programmes.

Mr. Chairman, the Youth Investments and Grants were reinstated. This year, 13 youth agencies received investments. Government recognises that a great deal of the work to support youth in Bermuda is being done by private agencies. Although youth agencies solicit funding from the private sector, we believe that Government has a very important role in standing in the gap. There were three new organisations onboarded in the area of sport, civic engagement, and physical and mental health.

Mr. Chairman, in this past year the department saw the completion and commencement of implementation of the National Sports Policy. This policy, which is due to run from 2022 to 2027, promises to

1. increase participation;
2. achieve sporting excellence regionally;
3. improve access to sporting facilities;
4. increase the value of sport; and
5. establish a framework for talent development.

The department has already started to fulfil the objectives of this policy and looks forward to solidifying its commitment to Bermuda sports.

Mr. Chairman, the sports section continues to produce a monthly sports newsletter, *The Competitive Edge*, to increase awareness of NSGBs' programming, events and performances that may not reach the mainstream media. There were many great things accomplished by our National Sports Governing Bodies throughout the year and were encapsulated within the newsletter.

Mr. Chairman, we also saw the return of the Annual Sports Awards. The return of the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme, which saw 10 junior athletes and seven NSGBs allocated funding toward their training and junior programming. These annual ceremonies are aligned with the department's mission statement, which is *To celebrate the accomplishments of our people*.

Mr. Chairman, the former Director, Mr. Norbert Simons, attended the 49th CARIFTA Games in Kingston, Jamaica, where he witnessed many outstanding performances.

The U20 women's relay team of Sanaa Rae Morris, Keturah Bulford-Trott, Shayla Cann and Caitlyn Bobb powered their way onto the podium with a third-place finish, setting a National Junior Record in a time of 3:48.69.

The U17 women's relay team also took to the track with a medal clearly on their collective agendas. Madisyn Bobb, S'Nya Cumberbatch, Jaeda Grant and Elise Dickinson powered the team into 2nd place and the silver medal at the games.

The former Director also attended the [2022] Commonwealth Games in Birmingham [England], where he had a bird's eye view to witness Jah-Nhai Perinchief earn the triple jump bronze medal, leaping a distance of 16.92 metres. Additionally, the Director was proud to witness our Dame Flora Duffy secure Bermuda a gold medal at the games. Winning the gold medal saw Dame Flora Duffy successfully defend her Triathlon title at the Commonwealth Games, becoming a back-to-back champion.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the dedicated staff at the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation led by the Director, Ms. Kimberley Charryse Bean for all of the work they do in advancing amateur sport, recreation and youth development for all, which enhances the quality of life for residents of Bermuda. Also, it is important for me to recognise the significant contributions made by our sportsmen and sportswomen and the pivotal role that they play in inspiring our youth to achieve their true potential.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the presentation on the fiscal year 2023/24 budgetary allocation for Head 20, the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITORS

The Chairman: Before we start speaking on the heads, I just want to recognise that we have in our Chamber the Permanent Secretary for Youth, Culture and Sport, Marva-Jean O'Brien, and the Director as well, Kimberly Bean. Thank you.

So at this point, would any Senator wish to speak on these heads?

Senator Smith, over to you.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

Sen. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon.

First, I would like to thank the Minister for the brief that he just presented to us. Obviously, sport is a very important part of my life, and I know that it is an important part of the lives of a lot of people in Bermuda.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new Director on her appointment. I have worked with her for several years in her other capacity, and I know that she will do an amazing job in this role. So congratulations to her.

I would like to start off by saying that I appreciate the time that I have had to communicate with the new Minister on the policy and on the things that both of us agree on that need to happen going forward to continue to encourage sport to be a priority for every government. I think it is important that we realise as a community what sport can do for our community. I think that what you see in this year's budget is the start of moving toward giving more funds toward sport. And I believe that some of that has been the catalyst of Flora Duffy winning a gold medal. And it starts to get people excited about what the possibility is. You have to have somebody be a trailblazer in order for others to follow that path.

Bermuda has had a long history of athletes who have been able to blaze that trail. The Minister spoke earlier today about Clyde Best and what that meant. And we had an opportunity to talk about what that documentary will mean to our community. And I think it is important that we continue to highlight the athletes and the trailblazers for our country who become the example for our youth to follow. Many times we see the headlines of the negative things that happen with our youth. But it is more important for us to celebrate all of the positive things that our young people are doing. And it is this department that spends a lot of time and energy making sure that these athletes and our young people are supported.

So those are my opening remarks before I ask some questions on the heads so that we can get into the details of where we are now and where I hope we will go as we continue to try to get more support for this department.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am going to start on page B-242. The Minister said that there was . . . I think it is [cost centre] 30030, Athletic Awards. He said it was \$160,000 that has been put forward for training and competition for athletes. If the Minister can give us a breakdown of the number of athletes that we would be talking about in this particular area and the average amount that would be given to these athletes toward training and competition.

I will say as somebody who deals with the administration side of traveling with teams for both training and competition, it has become more and more expensive for you to be able to take a team away, even if it is just a couple of individuals. Getting off Bermuda is expensive with the airfare, and then you have to accommodate and feed, and renting facilities. There is a lot of cost that goes into getting a performance from athletes. And that is the reason why it is important that we continue to see an increase in the funding. But we have just really started to scratch the surface of what

the needs are. And those are what I am hoping to be able to point out today.

So on [business unit] 30065, Sports Investment, the Minister laid out in his brief that this is where we would see the major increase of \$774,000. And in this area, you will have the funding that goes into the National Sports Governing Bodies in order for them to be able to fund the athletes for the upcoming year. When you look at the breakdown in the book, they are actually going to show you the breakdown from a past year. I believe it is 2021/22. So if the Minister can give us a breakdown of what we should be looking for in this upcoming year. Who will be getting the grants? And what can we expect out of the sports that are receiving these grants?

The reason I bring that up, Mr. Chairman, is that I think it is important that we look at the structure of each sport. We see what the support system is that is put around our athletes for them to be able to perform. And then are they actually achieving the results that were expected when the funding was given?

As we get to the part at the end of this year, as the Minister had pointed out we have awards that we give out. And you would have heard me ask a couple of days ago whether we are just going to be giving a certificate or whether there was going to be funding that was attached to it. And I will continue to drive that message. Because I know how expensive it is for our athletes to train and to perform. The part that is important is that I am not sure that everybody else always understands all of the things that go into achieving a performance from an athlete. Everybody in Bermuda was really excited at the end of that long journey when Dame Flora Duffy was able to achieve that gold medal. But that journey started in Bermuda when she was a young girl, and that support system that was people support, coaches, officials, people who are helping her along the way. But there was a lot of monetary support that had to happen in that journey for her to get there.

And in order for us to be able to produce another Flora Duffy in the future, we have to understand what the cost is to get them on that journey and understand that Bermuda is a more expensive place than anywhere on the planet. So when you look at the overall funding that this particular Ministry is getting compared to the result that we are expecting, even though there is an increase, it actually does not match what we are hoping for.

When you realise that we are spending significantly more money on our prisoners than we are on developing our young positive athletes, you will realise we are actually putting our money in the wrong spot. If we spent more money, more support at the beginning ages where we could develop the positive behaviour that I believe everybody in this Chamber would like to see, maybe the result at the end of the day would be more Flora Duffys and fewer people who are locked up in our prison facilities.

So, Mr. Chairman, there a very specific issue here when the Minister started to talk about the National Sports Centre. So this is under . . . I believe it is cost centre 30060. No. Under Sports Facilities, yes, business unit 30060. And he said the National Sports Centre and mentioned that it is an internationally certified facility.

So I have some significant questions on this particular area, starting with, Can the Minister provide us the details of the new trustees of that facility? In the past we would have known that several of the trustees stepped down because of the project that the Minister mentioned when there was an issue with how the loan was brought about in order to get the solar panel system brought online. The Minister has now stated to us that the deadline for when that solar panel project should have been completed has passed. Would he be able to tell us what the deadline was and what the new expected completion date would be? Could he give us the amount of money that we have lost in that period where we should have been looking for revenue or at least savings in the period while the project has continued to be well over-date? What is the estimated recovery for the power bill?

Mr. Chairman, can the Minister give us a breakdown of what the actual energy bill is for the National Sports Centre? And if possible, is able to give us what the separate cost is for powering the pool at the National Sports Centre compared to the rest of the facility? Obviously I am speaking specifically to that area, which I happen to have expertise in when it comes to the pool facility. The Minister and I have had several conversations on this particular issue. Heating and cooling a facility of that size has an extreme cost to it. You also have to circulate the water, and you have to put chemicals in that water. The question becomes, Do we have enough users to be able to cover the cost of a facility of that size considering the size of our population has continued to dwindle? So, can the Minister give us an idea of the revenue that is coming in for the pool, and then be able to compare that with the cost of running that pool facility? When the pool was built there was a changing room facility that was built that was supposed to be temporary because originally the next phase of the project was supposed to have a purpose-built building, a very large building that has not happened. So can the Minister let us know what the expected life expectancy was of that changing room facility, whether that changing room facility has now gone past its lifespan and what is the plan for how that will be replaced in the future if that is what needs to happen?

One of the biggest issues that we have in Bermuda is that we build facilities, but we do not tend to do the maintenance that needs to happen in order for that facility to stay at the level that it needs to operate. So these questions are specific to how we are progressing that in this major facility that we have. At the facility we will have several diving boards that are used for the div-

ing portion of the sport. So I am going to ask the Minister whether he is able to provide for us how many diving boards there are. What was the life expectancy of those diving boards? And what is the usage? Because I think Mr. Chairman mentioned it in another debate about *value for money*. So at some point you have to ask yourselves, Are we putting money into something that is not giving us a full return?

The heating of the pool in the wintertime is significant. What happens is as you are heating that pool, with cold air you are evaporating. That evaporation is literally money that we are sending up into the atmosphere. My question is, Why is it that we have bought covers for that facility and we have never used them? Would it not make more sense for us to find an engineer who can figure out how to put the covers on, to keep them on in that windy site so that we could save the money from that evaporation? I know from running a facility that the savings are significant. And it would have been a much easier and cheaper deal than having to go out and get solar panels to get (I am going to say) roughly the same amount of savings. So it would be important to find out whether the Minister has had an opportunity to look into that detail, whether he has been given a reason why that has not happened. And at this point have we had covers that have been sitting there from the first day that the pool opened that are now not at the level that they should be for us to even use, which would mean we would have to now purchase more.

Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of questions under programme 2004, still under this Sports Facilities section. The tennis stadium. If the Minister can let us know . . . I had a conversation last year with the previous Minister, and I brought it up in the debate that there was the potential for bringing international tennis matches in if we had added a couple of tennis courts. Would the Minister let me know whether there have been follow-up conversations with the Tennis Association about adding that and getting this opportunity to have further tennis tournaments come to Bermuda, which obviously would be a sports tourism option that I think everybody would agree would be a good idea for us to try to bring more revenue in to pay for our sports facility?

The Chairman: Minister, I will just ask. Would you prefer to start answering questions or let the questions continue?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Sen. Ben Smith: No problem.

I have asked this question for several years now. I do not know where to ask it. The question is, the Government purchased the Sandys 360 facility. It was supposed to be transferred to Sports. It has not been transferred to Sports. It is a sports facility. It is one of

the initiatives of the new policy that there will be further sports facilities. When can we expect it to be transferred? Is it operational? What is the amount of money that is outstanding for that facility? And if it is not going to be opened as a sports facility in the future, it would be great for the community to get an update on it.

I specifically bring that up because that facility is in the western end of the Island. And I note that under the Community Centres, the facility in the western end has a reduction of \$53,000. I was wondering if the Minister can let us know whether that will have any impact on the services that are available considering that last year that facility cost more than the eastern zone community centre. I know the Minister in his brief said that it was reallocated funds. I am just wondering if that reallocation will now have an impact on this community centre that would be important to the community in the western end of the Island.

Mr. Chairman, there was also quite a long discussion about moving the Bermuda School Sports Federation from Education to Sports. I bring that up because the Minister also is a spokesperson for Education, so he would be the perfect person to be able to give me an answer on whether that is still something that has the potential of happening. And if it is, when will it happen? Because I think it would be important for us as we are moving toward more focus on supporting our sports that we have synergy between what is happening in our schools and what is happening in the rest of the sports community. Most of us grew up in Bermuda where sports in school was the priority. It was the big deal that happened. And I think all of us will speak of it with pride.

As we are trying to have a healthier population, which means that we would want to have our young people exercising, participating in sports, let us figure out a way to pull those two things together so that we can continue the priority—which I agree with—that the Government is moving toward in this area. In any way that I can support making that happen, I will continue to push that particular agenda.

I think at this time I will give the Minister an opportunity to answer some of the questions that I have given. I have others, but I will give him some opportunity to answer.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Smith.

Minister, over to you.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That was a mouthful, and I expected nothing less from the national swim coach in another capacity. I am sure he has the answers to a lot of these questions already. But I will do my best to work through them, Mr. Chairman.

So for question number 1, Senator Smith asked about the breakdown for training and competition, the \$160,000 breakdown. So what we do not do at the beginning of a budget year is give a breakdown or

average. The Bermuda Olympic Association [BOA] actually deals with the elite athlete distribution. And it is dependent on the athlete category and the number of events on the individual athlete's calendar. So for the elite athletes, the Bermuda Olympic Association has a matrix that they work out. I think there is a Category A, a Category B and a Category C. And based on whether the athlete actually fits into those categories, it is based on what the BOA actually gives.

I will get back to that in just a minute. I have got some more to add on to that.

Question 2, the question was about sports investment under [cost centre] 30065. We see an increase, and that is the intent of the department, to increase our funding and investment in sport. Senator Smith has asked for a breakdown. He has asked, Who will get grants and what is the expectation from those who are receiving sports grants? So the investment is based on performance. With previous years' allocated funding, long gone are the days where funding was provided to NSGBs without a return on investment. So for 2023/24, we actually are in the process of looking at these allocations, and the funding will be finalised next week.

All of the NSGBs are required to send in a report to the department. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the sports officers who administrate and monitor this, Senior Sports Manager, Mr. Jekon Edness, as well as Mr. Maceo Dill. Anybody who works the National Sports Governing Bodies will be familiar with these two gentlemen and the work that they do to basically look over the NSGBs, all 25 of them, to make sure that they are compliant with the criteria of the National Sports Governing Bodies.

So as was mentioned a moment ago, what do we do as far as, what is the expectation? The expectation is that if you are receiving this grant, then you are able to show how you have invested that money, what you have used it for. And a lot of that also is like, do you have youth programmes? There is a whole expectation that comes with these grants and being part of the National Sports Governing Bodies.

Also, we go back to the breakdown of funding. For the National Junior Sponsorship, also under [cost centre] 30030, we currently have sent out the applications to the National Sports Governing Bodies for those fundings.

So it is very important—I would like to point this out here and kind of use it as giving my answers—to give a public service announcement to these National Sports Governing Bodies that it is very important that you stay in touch with the sports officers. When they send out information, make sure you are getting it. Because there have been some unfortunate situations where National Sports Governing Bodies have not kept up with their administration. They have not met deadlines. And it puts sometimes the sporting organisations in a difficult situation if we have had to allocate that

funding elsewhere. I mean, if we are waiting for an application and it does not come . . . we are not going to hold onto money, we give it to an organisation.

And I would also say there have been some National Sports Governing Bodies that have been allocated a certain amount of funds. For whatever reason in their organisation, they did not use it and they did return it. So that does happen from time to time.

There were some extensive questions regarding the National Sports Centre. And I would first like to say that anybody who has been using the National Sports Centre for the last couple of months will know that especially on the western side, the parking has dwindled down quite a bit because we are putting up the carport.

So that is what it is. I know we always refer to it as an energy project. But a lot of people say, *Well, we don't understand what that facility or what that structure that is going up is*. So what it is, it is a very unique and space-saving way to actually put up solar panels. And it is going to be a carport, so we are not going to be losing any parking spaces once it is completed. But we put it up. The solar panels are on the top. If you take a drive by Roberts Avenue today or any time soon, you will see that. I think the majority of the panels have now been put in place, and the next step is to actually run the trenches to run the connections. So that is what it actually is. As mentioned in the brief, it is anticipated that a majority, if not all, of the energy coming from the National Sports Centre will be generated from those solar panels once it is all set up and connected, and all necessary provisions have been put in place.

One of the questions was to provide the details of the new boards of trustees. Now I can tell you that I cannot speak to the thoughts of any previous board members before I actually was on the board. Most people would know that I was the Chair last year. But before that is when the energy project was discussed and decided upon. So unfortunately I cannot speak to or answer what the thoughts of any former members of any former boards on the NSC [National Sports Centre] would be. But I can happily, Mr. Chairman, talk about the new members of this National Sports Centre Board of Trustees.

I would like to commend those who have recently left the board for other reasons. And that would be myself who had to leave, and a young lady by the name of Ms. Ojeda Smith. Ms. Ojeda Smith is a young lawyer who is doing very well in her professional career. She is a fitness guru, I would call her, and she did good work while she was a member of the board of trustees. And due to work commitments that she has had to step away. So I can tell you that the two resignations that we did see are on the immediate past board had nothing to do with any controversy, Mr. Chairman.

I am happy to announce today, and most people would have seen it gazetted, that about a week ago the new Chairman of the National Sports Centre is a former track star himself, now a regulator at one of the

local companies, a young man by the name of Mr. Taijuan Talbot. He has previously been on the board, but he has now accepted the role of chairman. Mr. Wayne Dill remains on the board of the National Sports Centre Board of Trustees, as well as Mr. Leon Bascome remains on the board.

Now Mr. Leon Bascome, I would like to publicly thank him. From the time of October to just recently last week, Mr. Leon Bascome, who was previously the Deputy Chair of the Board—and he will stay as Deputy Chair. But Mr. Leon Bascome for almost six months stepped into the role that I know was a very, very difficult, difficult time for him in his professional and personal life. And he stepped in to assist with the leading the Board of Trustees at the National Sports Centre. So I want to publicly today thank Mr. Leon Bascome for his service in stepping into that role to lead the Board of Trustees and the running of the National Sports Centre.

Mr. Mark Steede, most people would know him in his capacity as the President of the Devonshire Recreation Club. He also has an affiliation . . . I think on the management of the Bermuda Football Association. Mr. Mark Steede also won a triple crown many years ago with Devonshire Cougars. So I want to thank Mr. Mark Steede for continuing his time on the board and his service to the National Sports Centre.

As well as Ms. Vanessa Turner. Ms. Vanessa Turner is the mother of an up-and-budding track star. (Her name escapes me right now. I will just call her Ms. Turner.) Arima Turner, who is going to be representing Bermuda at the CARIFTA Games in the Bahamas this year. She is overseas, and she is an amazing track star. So, Ms. [Vanessa] Turner, I want to say thank you for your expertise on the board.

But, Mr. Chairman, as the Senator asked . . . I am glad he asked about this board because I want to publicly welcome two of the newest members of the NSC. Mr. Grant Hopkins comes with a very extensive financial background in another place of his professional life. And he is going to come onto the board of the NSC and assist with the management of how we increase revenues and how we deal with a lot of the business end stuff. So thank you to Mr. Grant Hopkins for accepting the role to come on as a trustee of the National Sports Centre.

And of course, the final name of one of the newest board members of the NSC is Mr. Jon Beard. Anybody who has been connected with sports over the last (I would say) 30-plus years would know that Mr. Beard has a great passion for sports in this country. He has previously served on the board before my time. And in his new-found life he has a little bit more time. And I did ask Mr. Beard if he would come and lend his expertise to this National Sports Centre Board of Trustees, and he has accepted.

So I want to thank . . . once again I will repeat their names. The Chair of the Board, Mr. Taijuan Talbot; Mr. Wayne Dill; Grant Hopkins; Jonathan Beard; Leon Bascome; Mark Steede; and Vanessa Turner for

their service to the National Sports Centre, which as we did say in the brief, always has its difficulty in being on that board. They have to balance the National Sports Governing Bodies that always are looking for usage and increased usage of that. They have to balance the issues as the National Swim Coach did point out with the Aquatic Centre. The Aquatic Centre is a beautiful facility. But it does (and I will get into that in a minute) cost quite a bit to run such a facility, as well as the hockey teams and everyone else.

So that is a facility as we did say in the brief that is very near and dear to Bermuda. But we have to come up with unique ways to balance how we increase the revenues and how we cut back on some of the expenses in what is, as would have been pointed out by some, becoming an ageing facility. So the department along with the connections of the trustees, as well as the users all are working together to figure out how we best utilise the National Sports Centre and run it on a daily basis.

So thank you. Thank you, Senator Smith, for asking those very important questions about who the board members are and how they go about their duties and responsibilities for running the National Sports Centre. We really do appreciate your asking so I can take time to highlight those individuals, Senator. So, thank you. I do appreciate that. Yes.

So, on to some of the other questions. I know that there was a lot about the National Sports Centre. And yes, I did mention in the brief that the energy project at the national stadium is running behind. I mean, we did have a pandemic. It was a pandemic that is still technically going on. And I will tell you that this pandemic caused a lot of things around this country to slow down, construction projects and the like. So, while the time that we would have liked this solar project to be up and running has passed, I can assure you that it will be up and running shortly.

I know I would like to give a shout-out now to Earl Basden from islandstats.com. I was in an interview with him last week. He had very interesting drone footage of the project. And anyone could look at that and see that the project is coming along nicely. And it is something that I think Bermudians will be definitely proud of. And as I said in the brief, the savings on that project will be immense. I am hearing . . . and I am no solar expert. But I am hearing that we are looking to cover the cost with this project.

So, yes. And I do have confirmation that all solar panels have been installed. As I mentioned, the next phase is trenching to lay some cables, to connect the electrical rooms for the grandstand. And then, you know, you have got to dig some other trenches to connect the south fields. And yes, unfortunately as everyone would know, due to this delay the board has been faced with some bills of the Aquatic Centre. I mean, it is very important, the Aquatic Centre, because think: The Aquatic Centre hosts our national swim meets. Many of the swim clubs use the Aquatic Centre. But

yes, the bill for that Aquatic Centre is climbing because we are a little behind on the completion of this energy project.

But to answer your question, we have not lost any money on the project itself. We have not. And the energy bill for the National Sports Centre is very steep. It is a yearly bill that is very high. And I cannot wait until this energy project comes online so we can bring that cost down.

So the energy project, as stated, will cover the facility as a whole. And I would like to talk about the covers that were mentioned by Senator Smith. We can go back and maybe discuss some of the intricate details of how people can save money. I mean, I wish my kids would turn the lights off more at the house. But with that said, I think that we need to focus our energies on this National Sports Centre and the solar project that is coming on, because once we have this solar project up and running, I do not feel that the covers and getting a proper engineer to put covers on and take them off will be an issue anymore. The energy project, the solar project will cover that. And we will not have an issue of cover.

It is thought that putting the covers on and taking them off every day, with the amount of wind that is up there, would cause a significant number of man-hours, which may take any savings that are made with this project and take them at a nil savings. (Give me a second. I am just looking at this.)

Okay. So there was also a question about the National Sports Centre about the temporary building. Yes, the building was supposed to be temporary, and again this is all connected to trying to gain more revenues and cut down on costs. But this building is about five to six years past its useful life. And the centre core plans were actually never moved on.

There were plans that were put in place to build a centre core. There were plans, and I have seen them (I think it was phase 5 they called it), which was to have a gym and some other fancy facilities. But I would say, Mr. Chairman, that right now the Board of Trustees at the National Sports Centre are focusing right now on, how do we get the expenditures for what we have under control and gain some revenues before we even can look at what whether we are going to phase 4 (which is the centre core and phase 5)?

I can tell you that there are individuals who are keen to get that moving. But what has not been figured out is, How do we pay for that? Because what we will not do, Mr. Chairman (and this Government is being fiscally responsible), is to bite off more than we can chew as far as building more when right now we are not able to effectively cover the costs of what we have.

But just in case anybody wanted to know, those centre core plans include a basketball court, some offices, changing rooms, concessions and meeting rooms. So when we get where we are currently under control, we will be able to move on to possibly looking

at the viability of moving into phase 4 or phase 5 of this budget.

So back to the pool covers. Yes, I do have some more information on the pool covers. A thorough analysis was spearheaded by Kennon Johnson. He was one of the architects for the project about 10 years ago. And it was decided at that time that putting the covers on and off on a daily basis did not indicate any significant savings. As we know, the National Sports Centre, based on its location, Mr. Chairman, is exposed to strong northerly winds. And the covers do not have the mechanism to be secured. And [with] the strength of the winds, we would likely experience ripping on the covers or create sail, which means the covers would be flying. And we could find ourselves in a situation where the damage from those flailing covers could cause significant injury.

The weight of the rollers and the covers would possibly break the tiles. And, Mr. Chairman, I can say, and I am sure the National Swim Coach in another place, but in this case Senator Smith would agree that that is very dangerous. And it is probably a bad decision.

Senator Smith asked about the diving boards. There are about four diving boards that are at the National Sports Centre. And I want to take this time to recognise Bermuda's only Olympic diver, Ms. Katura Horton-Perinchief, who has consistently decided to give back of her talents in her diving camp that she has every year up at the National Sports Centre. And with the use of the four diving boards that we have, two of those diving boards are one-metre boards. And two of those boards are three-metre boards. And Ms. Horton as well as her team have this camp, and they are working toward possibly producing another diver of her calibre so one day Bermuda can once again say that we have another, or next Katura Horton-Perinchief to use those diving boards at this wonderful facility.

So the current boards, as asked by Senator Smith, are 10 years old. Yes, Mr. Chairman, 10 years old. And no, I have not jumped off of the diving board yet. I heard that it was supposed to be something that the Chairman or the Minister has to do. But I have not had a chance to dive off of those boards. But maybe I will be contacted by our former Olympic diver and she could show me a trick or two. But yes, those boards are 10 years old. They are due to be replaced this year.

And much to the National Swim Coach's delight, I am sure that he would be happy to hear that the replacement boards have already been ordered. And according to industry standards, the boards should be replaced every seven to ten years. So if we take those industry standards, based on the window that we are in, we are right on the back end of the life of those boards.

Yes, so I am being reminded that if I do dive, Mr. Chairman, it has to be off of a 10-metre diving board. Maybe the National Sports Centre could get

some revenues to see the Minister dive off of a 10-metre platform.

[Laughter]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: So I think there is some more on the NSC. Let me just see. Changing rooms we talked about. The savings. Yes, so I think we have exhausted [the subject] when it comes to the pool.

And we will just get to the other questions. I would never like to leave any questions unanswered by the good Senator.

The Chairman: Just as a reminder, I think the tennis stadium was one question that he asked, whether we would be adding any tennis tournaments—

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely. I am getting to that right now, Mr. Chairman.

Tennis stadium. So the Senator asked about if [we] have had any follow-up conversations about extra courts and more tournaments. So there have been no conversations with the Bermuda Lawn Tennis Association, who regularly use the WER Joel Tennis Stadium. And currently if you go down to the tennis stadium today, on day like today, you will notice that the tennis stadium, unfortunately, is underutilised in the day. And that is why you would have seen and heard a lot of complaints coming into the department about getting the lights up, because most people, especially who are using that facility, are individuals who like to go down and have recreation tennis after work. So I am so glad that daylight savings time came and gave us a little bit of extra time to get the lights up. But I do not think it will be wise for us to expand the tennis stadium at this time. However, it may not be a proper return on investment as currently there is only one ITF tournament per year. So work is currently going on behind the scenes to ensure that the facility increases revenue going forward.

And I would just like to highlight kind of a new association that I expect very shortly that they may actually become a National Sports Governing Body, and that is the Pickleball Association of Bermuda. And if you know anything about pickleball, I got a great education on this. Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in North America. And quietly there have been pickleball tournaments that have taken place in Bermuda. I know that Mr. Lamb up there at Pompano has converted some of his courts to pickleball. I do know that the Pomander Gate has converted many of their courts to pickleball. And even if you would have seen a publication recently, Government House (most people do not know this) has tennis courts that have also been converted to pickleball.

So I will tell you this. I have been invited to play pickleball. And I know there may be some other Senators in this Chamber who think they can beat me in pickleball. But I will not play them until I get caught up to speed.

But back to the tennis stadium, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to report that we are actually in the process of converting one tennis stadium, one tennis court, to a pickleball court. And what is unique about this sport, and we are talking about revenues here, is that we cannot find enough pickleball courts in Bermuda at this current time. And I have been made to understand that many of the pickleball, or some of the pickleball enthusiasts like to play during the day. So why not use this growing sport as an opportunity to increase revenues at the Sports Centre?

So what we have done and are in the process of doing, I just got a picture about two hours ago, that the pickleball court that is being put at the government tennis stadium is almost complete. They have put the lines down. And out of one tennis court, you can actually convert that to four pickleball courts. And I think pickleball, if I have this right, has four players at a time. So if you do the math on that, we can definitely increase revenues at the tennis facility by moving. And this is an example of, under the leadership of our Director, Mr. Chairman, that we are being innovative with sports. *Sport matters*, Mr. Chairman.

And what we see here is that, rather than let an ageing facility just languish and people who are not using it, we have actually pivoted and we are going to put pickleball . . . There are some tennis enthusiasts who may not be thrilled about that. But as the Minister responsible for Sport, I think it is wise of me to see what we can do to increase participation, which is one of the goals of the Sports Policy, in sports all around Bermuda. So I am happy to announce that today about pickleball coming on board. I am sure in upcoming weeks you will hear more about the pickleball association.

And I do not know, Mr. Chairman. Maybe we can invite you to get involved in this very large and exciting pickleball tournament that I think we are going to probably have later this spring or early in the summer.

The Chairman: Minister, I will follow you off of the diving board first, and then to the pickleball courts—

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely. See? *Sports matters*.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to get through these questions. I am so glad that the Senator asked them. And it gives me an opportunity to answer them in great detail.

So, Mr. Chairman, Senator . . . oh, sorry. Great news! And this has just come in. The lights for the tennis stadium, for those who have been asking. I am not going to call her name, but it is one very, very popular doctor in Bermuda has been asking me about tennis lights for a while. And I am glad to say that, as long as the wind is not at high levels tomorrow, the lights are due to be installed tomorrow at the tennis stadium. So we are looking forward to that, and we can get back out and start having some night tennis. Number 5,

there was a question about Sandys 360. Unfortunately, and I know there has been some frustration as you mentioned before about where this lies. But Senator Smith will know that this Sandys 360 is a building, part of government. And it is currently . . . Well, I am not even sure it is part of government. But it is not under the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport. So I do not think in this debate it will be wise for me to mention anything about Sandys 360 because it does not come under our Ministry.

The Chairman: Minister, we have about eight minutes left.

So, Senator Smith, have all of your questions been answered, or is there a follow-up?

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: No, no. There is more there. There are questions 5, 6, 7. Yes, I am going to get to them all, Mr. Chairman.

There was a question also, Mr. Chairman, about the reduction of one assistant community worker and a decrease in salaries by \$53,000. So no programmes will be affected by this, and the two remaining assistant community workers will be spread across locations. And I just want to take this opportunity to speak about the amazing work that is going on at these centres. I know in this particular case we are talking about the West End. And the West End Community Centre, which I have had the opportunity to visit all of them. The West End Community Centre is doing really good work up there under the leadership of Ms. Diane DeRosa. They do different things for the community. Recently they had a wine night. They have had youth nights. I know coming up for the holiday, I am sure they will be having some kite-making up there. And it is really, really impressive to see the work that goes on at these community centres. And it is almost like an open-door policy where after school, you know, more like the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, how we come in and it is a safe space for our youth. So I want to talk about that, that we are doing great work up there.

And also at the Sammy Wilson [Community Centre], which we know is closed right now for health and safety reasons. But it should be open very, very shortly within probably the next week or so. And I know that they host camps when school is out, as we said in the brief. They have a ping-pong night with some organisations. I know there are drumming classes that happen there. Again, there are some very prominent names in this community that have been able to be raised and be benefited from the services of these community clubs.

And not forgetting the East End Community Centre, which churns out the St. George's Dancerettes and other programmes. So yes, no programme has been affected by the decrease in salaries for these community workers.

Question 6 talked about the Bermuda School Sports Federation. And I have heard discussions about

that. It does seem to make sense. So the question was, *Does this have potential to happen?* And we need synergy between schools and sports. So that is a decision that I will take under advisement. I will sit down and we will have a discussion with the Minister of Education because that is where it lies. But it is interesting that we talk about synergies between education and sports.

We do know, you would have known, Senator Smith, that there have been sports meets for the last couple of weeks happening at the National Sports Centre and around school fields all around this country. And I have had the opportunity to attend not many, but one or two of these school sports. I do intend to attend the senior inter-school sports coming up. They had to be rescheduled. So there currently are very good synergies that take place between education and sports when necessary. I did get a call earlier today that my alma mater, Harrington Sound Primary School, won the inter-school sports yesterday. And if I were not here answering these questions and giving this amazing brief on sports in Bermuda, we would have been able to see those synergies and I would have attended Harrington Sound.

So yes, there currently are many synergies in sports and education. And specifically, with the BSSF [Bermuda School Sports Federation Ltd.] we will revisit that. And we will see if it is something that the Ministry or the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation has the capacity to come in.

And with that, I think I have answered all of the questions from Senator Smith. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister.

I think we have now only one minute.

Senator Smith, do you have any further questions? Or are you satisfied with [the answers]?

Sen. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So two quick questions. The first one would be if the Minister could tell us when the audited financials for the National Sports Centre will be provided?

And the other one would be on the BSADA [Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority]. I know that there was a strong discussion over the last year about the potential of removing the need for sports to have . . . we talk a lot about the performance-enhancing drugs. But there is the illicit drug side of BSADA and whether that is going to be something that goes forward or not, because obviously that would be a significant difference in the funding to BSADA, because a lot of the testing is actually on the illicit side. So if the Minister could speak on that, I think that would be helpful. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

Minister, you have 45 seconds.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: The audited financials, I said in the brief very clearly that we are currently working with the Auditor General to work through those to get those financials sorted.

And I am happy to report that on the matter of illicit drugs, I will bring a statement to this Senate Chamber very shortly to clarify the position of the Bermuda Government when it comes to testing for illicit drugs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

So I think we are now at the stage of completion of two hours. So I will ask the Minister to move these heads.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that Heads 71 and 20 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: Any objection to moving those heads? Hearing none, these heads are so moved.

[Motion carried: The Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, Heads 71 and 20 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2023/24.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Senators.

That completes that Ministry. And now I will ask my colleague, Senator Bell, to assume the Chair for the remaining heads relating to Immigration, Financial Assistance and Workforce Development. Thank you.

[Sen. Kiernan Bell, Chairman]

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Senators. We are on the home stretch.

We are now in the Committee of the whole for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2023, together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2023/24. The Ministry under consideration is [Economy and] Labour. The heads for debate under this Ministry are Immigration, Head 27, page B-177; Financial Assistance, Head 55 at page B-182; and Workforce Development, Head 60 at page B-186.

The number of hours allotted to these heads is two. It is 3:34. So we will finish at 5:34.

The Senator in charge is Senator Leslie Robinson.

Senator Robinson, how do you wish to proceed?

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 27, Immigration; Head 55, Financial Assistance; and Head 60, Workforce Development.

I will start with Head 27, Department of Immigration, which can be found on pages B-177 to B-181 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND LABOUR

HEAD 27—DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION

Sen. Leslie Robinson: If you turn to page B-177, the Department of Immigration has been allocated a budget of \$6,138,000 for the fiscal year 2023/24. The expenditure has increased by \$620,000, thus reflecting an 11 per cent increase in comparison to our concurrent financial year of 2022/23.

Madam Chairman, the material changes of the subjective analysis of the current account estimates as compared with the 2022/23 year can be found on page B-178 and are as follows:

Salaries increased by \$137,000, or 4 per cent. This increase is required to cover the overtime costs of the Compliance section. Overtime is required when commercial flights arrive late or medical emergency jets arrive and depart outside of normal operating hours. Lastly, overtime is also incurred when officers conduct deportations.

The next item is Professional Services. During year 2022/23, a supplemental increase was issued to cover the cost to on board consultants to assist with the backlog and high volume of applications. This budget type increased by 85 per cent in comparison to the original budget for the period. For year 2023/24 the budget further increased by 6 per cent, \$58,000, from the revised budget of 2022/23.

Next item, Rentals. The revised estimate increased marginally from \$70,000 in 2022/23 to \$102,000 in comparison to 2022/23 estimate. But it is projected to be \$70,000 in 2023/24. This increase was also related to the costs associated with onboarding of additional staffing. Initially, the department sought to rent office space externally. However, office space became available within the Government Administration Building at no cost.

Finally, Other Expenses. The electronic platform due to launch in 2022 was postponed. As a result, the funding estimated to cover the cost of credit card commission was not budgeted in the next fiscal period.

Revenue Summary

Sen. Leslie Robinson: The revenue summary is outlined on page B-178. The total revenue estimate for 2023/24 is \$19,784,000, an increase of \$6,009,000, or 44 per cent in comparison to 2022/23. Immigration's revenue estimates are in line with the collective revenue during 2022/23 and the previous two fiscal years. The most material changes are as follows:

1. Passport Issuance. Estimated revenue has increased by \$84,000, or 11 per cent, with a pro-

jected collection of \$823,000. Passport submissions have steadily increased throughout the current fiscal year. It is expected that the revenue for passport applications will continue to generate high collections during the upcoming year.

2. Work Permits. Full- and part-time have increased by \$4,644,000, or 52 per cent over the original estimate of 2022/23. Despite various closed categories, the revenue collected during financial year 2022/23 was consistent with previous years. It is expected that the upcoming revenues for this line item will exceed current collections.
3. Work permits, Temporary. This has increased by \$866,000, or 51 per cent over the original estimates of 2022/23. It is expected that the revenue collections for temporary permits will be in line with previous years.
4. Work permits, Work and Reside. Estimated revenue for 2023/24 has decreased in comparison to 2022/23 by \$757,000, or 66 per cent. This decrease of collections is based on current year collections. It is predicted that the department will be able to achieve the same level of collections, as not as many work and reside applications were submitted for 2022/23.
5. Work Permits, Appeals. Estimated revenue has also decreased by \$47,000, or 41 per cent, in comparison to 2022/23.
6. Nationality. During the 2022/23 fiscal year, this application submission type increased by \$111,000, or 90 per cent in comparison to the estimated revenue collections for the period. As a result, the 2023/24 revenue has been estimated to be at similar levels.
7. Status and Naturalisation. On January 1, 2022, Immigration started accepting applications for Permanent Resident's Certificates [PRCs] for long-term residents which resulted in an influx of applications. It was expected for application submissions to plateau during the current fiscal year; however, collections doubled in 2022/23. The estimated collections for 2023/24 have been set based on current year revenue, which is expected to achieve the same results.

Existing and New Capital Projects

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, no capital acquisitions funding has been allocated for 2023/24, and this can be found on page C-13.

Madam Chairman, highlights of key accomplishments for fiscal year 2022/23. There was an active flow of applications throughout the year for the one-year Work from Bermuda (the WFB) Certificate. During the period April 1, 2022, to February 4, 2023, the De-

partment of Immigration received 226 applications representing \$95,438 in fees. Since its inception on August 1, 2020, the following are the current totals:

- total applications received, 1,449;
- total applications approved, 1,174;
- total applications refused, 197;
- total applicants who continue to reside in Bermuda is 269; and
- total renewals and extensions is 181.

Applications are refused for a myriad of reasons including incomplete/bogus applications, applicant possessing insufficient funds to fully sustain themselves, the role does not allow for remote working. And this could be, for example, a fireman.

The WFB Certificate continues to be promoted by the Bermuda Business Development Agency and the Bermuda Tourism Authority. The results of their support mean that the WFB continues to meet its extended purpose, which is to boost economic activity, to enrich Bermuda's brand and reputation as an ideal place to work or study remotely, to increase the local real estate market and to change short-term resident opportunities into long-term investments.

The fact that the WFB prevents persons from being employed in Bermuda by local business means that such persons cannot compete for local jobs, thereby allowing for more local employment opportunities for Bermudians.

Madam Chairman, as a reminder, the WFB policy encourages people who can effectively work remotely, have financial means to fully sustain themselves, would like to work in Bermuda in a non-Bermuda-based or non-Bermuda-registered legal entity or partnership or would like to complete their post-secondary studies from Bermuda.

Individuals can apply for a WFB Certificate via the portal at forms.gov.bm. A list of frequently asked questions assists individuals with gaining knowledge about the policy.

Madam Chairman, just over a year ago, January 1, 2022, the Department of Immigration started to receive Permanent Resident's Certificate applications from long-term residents. Since inception, the department has received 194 applications, and more than half of this number are well advanced in the process. This number is almost four times greater than the total number of 51 recorded in the budget brief for 2022/23. The processing of the applications can take approximately six to nine months from submission to a decision, depending on the volume of applications to be processed as matched with available human resources. At February 6, 2023, a total of 53 applications had already been approved and 45 had already been vetted and need to undergo second-level vetting by a supervisor.

As with the Work from Bermuda Certificate policy, the long-term residents Amendment Act [Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2021] is meeting its intended goals. It is addressing the associated issues that affect the following real-life scenarios:

- a) persons who were born in or arrived at Bermuda at an early age and have been ordinarily resident in Bermuda;
- b) persons who have been ordinarily resident in Bermuda seeking to remain and who have continuously contributed to the Bermuda community;
- c) a divorced parent of a Bermudian child;
- d) an unwed parent of a Bermudian child; and
- e) children of first- and second-generation Permanent Resident's Certificate holders who have been ordinarily resident in Bermuda.

By allowing long-term residents to apply for and become PRC holders in Bermuda, it means that the stressful thought of certain family members being asked to leave Bermuda and/or indefinitely being under Immigration control now means that families remain together and are able to provide meaningful contributions to Bermuda's social and economic strata.

Madam Chairman, during 2022/23 the Department of Immigration even has long-standing processes and/or introduced new processes. I will now focus on these areas. Madam Chairman, there is high worldwide demand for qualified actuaries. And trying to attract quality candidates to Bermuda is a very competitive process. Due to the expansion and the evolution of the insurance and reinsurance industry in Bermuda, there is even more demand for actuaries. These factors combined have made it essential that Bermuda companies move quickly to secure the talent required to execute their business plans within the backdrop of these human resource shortages.

A new process which would help with expediting work permit applications of qualified actuaries was introduced in April of 2022 for 12 months. To be eligible for quicker turnaround time for the approval of a work permit, applicants (1) must be a member with achieved fellowship or associateship status in compliance with one of the leading globally accepted actuary associations; and (2) must have a minimum of three years relevant experience in the insurance, reinsurance or consulting industries. Work permit applications submitted by qualified actuaries are processed within five business days. Although advertising is not required, employers must apply for waiver for advertising and pay the advertisement waiver fee.

Additionally, the process allows for simultaneous application for an applicant, spouse or partner to reside and seek employment in Bermuda, provided a complete application is submitted and the relevant fee is remitted to the department. As there is no statutory body for Bermuda for actuaries, applications are not referred at all, not even to the CPA of Bermuda. Questions regarding this initiative may be directed to the Chief Immigration Officer, Dr. Danette Ming. Her contact details are on the government website.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Immigration receives several requests for emergency passports for medical travel. And to settle the issue for what is

required for eligibility for an emergency passport, the department formally prepared written guidance. In November 2022, the guidance for requesting an emergency passport for medical reasons was published in the government portal, www.gov.bm. To date, the guidance is proving to be extremely helpful because it provides the necessary clarity to potential emergency passport applicants. The following requirements must be satisfied in order for the Department of Immigration Passport Team to consider an application for an emergency passport for medical travel:

1. Complete passport application form. The application form must be accessed at the government's website;
2. If the expired passport has been lost or stolen, then a lost/stolen form must be also submitted. And this can be found on the government website;
3. Two passport photos;
4. Patient needs emergency passport letters from the local physician and from the overseas care facility. Letters must include the patient's full name, date of birth and appointment date. If patient needs to be accompanied by someone who does not have a valid passport, then letters from the local physician and the overseas care facilities—letters must include the patient's full name, date of birth and appointment date and also expressly state that the patient must be accompanied by someone, and provide the full name and date of birth of the person who is intending to accompany the patient;
5. Application must be hand-delivered to the Department of Immigration. Once the department has considered the request and if approved, the required fees will be confirmed. Note the assessment may require the submission of additional documents; and finally,
6. Fees. The standard temporary and express passport fees apply and are payable online. Current fees and bank details can be found on the government's portal. Proof of payment must be submitted to the Department of Immigration.

Once the application is deemed complete, including receipt of proof of payment, the emergency payment will be processed and the applicant will be contacted when it is ready to be issued. Weekend emergency passport service will *only* be subject to medivac travel, and the Department of Immigration will *only* liaise with social workers at the Bermuda Hospitals Board.

Madam Chairman, I will now discuss the moratorium on job categories. The Ministry of Economy and Labour appreciates the current challenges within our local labour market and the significant impact the pandemic has had on many local businesses. Our aim is always to ensure the effective use of policies that create jobs for Bermudians. Dating back to August 1,

2021, a moratorium was placed on certain job categories to restrict employment in Bermuda of non-Bermudians. The initial moratorium was for a three-month period. The moratorium remains in place, having had the following extensions:

- February 1, 2022, to July 31, 2022, six months;
- August 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, five months; and most recently,
- January 1, 2023, to May 31, 2023, five months.

At the announcement of the current extension, General Bartenders was moved from the restricted list to the closed list. And Guest Service Agents was added to the closed list. In accordance with the Work Permit Policy, section 3.7, the application process for jobs in the restricted category is the same as for the open category except the employer must (a) apply for a maximum term of one year; and (b) submit evidence that any candidates screened and recommended by the Department of Workforce Development have been appropriately considered.

Department of Workforce Development is expected to respond to inquiries by employers within 10 days. Should no response be forthcoming from the Department of Workforce Development, the employer may submit the application with written evidence that they made inquiries.

The partner of a Bermudian Permanent Resident's Certificate holder non-Bermudian on a work permit, or other legal resident of Bermuda who has already received permission to reside, may now apply to seek employment. Partners who do not have permission to reside may apply to reside and seek employment.

The closed list of companies, there are 46 jobs in total. And for the sake of time I will not name all of those, the various jobs. The restricted list comprises 11 jobs in total.

Madam Chairman, in September 2023 [*sic*], the Department of Immigration hired 10 vendor customer service representatives to assist with the backlog of applications in the Bermuda Passport Section. In particular, some were deployed to assist with the backlog of work permit applications. Prior to this date, there were delays in processing British Overseas Territories Citizen (BOTC) Bermuda passports. The processing timeline significantly exceeded the published 11-week timeframe. Several factors contributed to the delays, including the volume of applications, human resource challenges, sick absences due to the pandemic and the in-depth requirements by His Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) in the UK for vetting a passport application.

Although the vendors did not all start at the same time, each underwent in-house training so that they were acclimated with key processes, policies and legislation. The department has made significant strides in reducing the application timeframe, and undoubtedly the team will by March 31, 2023, return to processing passports within 11 weeks.

Madam Chairman, I wish to communicate that the overarching issues, the inability to print full-validity passports in Bermuda and the GBR code are not lost on the Ministry or department. We are conscious of the fact that the BOTC Bermuda passport holders are still encountering problems when they travel to certain jurisdictions. A solution is still being sought to address these issues.

Madam President, I will now advance to talk about new or continuance of initiatives. A few initiatives which were started in 2022/23 will continue in the new fiscal year. For instance:

- review or rewrite of the Work Permit Policy;
- digitisation of immigration applications;
- extending the use of the e-Gates at the L. F. Wade International Airport; and
- enhance border control monitoring at the seaport.

Recruitment Updates

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, I would like to speak a bit about the objectives of the digitisation of immigration applications. This objective of the automation project is still to transition as much as possible away from paper-based processes. Due to the cost and complexity of automation of the processes, the department is implementing the project in phases.

This current phase of the project includes, but is not limited to electronic submission of applications, payment of application fees via a payment gateway, workflow, vetting and validation, status updates with log-in ability, approval by the Minister or by Immigration senior leadership, production and disbursement of final immigration documents.

Madam Chairman, the other initiative is Immigration Reform. As already alluded to earlier, plans are afoot for immigration reform which seeks to modernise the country's immigration laws and supporting policies, and create operational efficiencies through process improvement.

The goal of immigration reform is to ensure that the big picture is one that benefits all of Bermuda. In the past, we have discussed reforms to immigration in a very myopic way, such as, work permits, permanent residency or the emotive and politically divisive issue of granting status. Unfortunately, that dialogue has overshadowed the immediate need to overhaul and completely revise the laws, policies, systems and resources required to ensure that Bermuda has an immigration system that is unbiased and beneficial for today's Bermuda.

Madam Chairman, the department's recruitment update is as follows. The number of employees required for the department to operate efficiently is outlined on page B-179. There are 44 established full-time posts, of which, 13 of these posts are currently vacant. A list of the vacant posts include

- managerial roles—4;
- officer roles—4;
- administrative/customer care roles—5.

Madam Chairman, in conclusion, I would like to thank the dedicated members of staff at the Department of Immigration. I would like to thank the Immigration team under the leadership of Dr. Danette Ming, Chief Immigration Officer, and Ms. Marita Grimes, Assistant Chief Immigration Officer, together with Ms. Lauren Sadler-Best of the Attorney General's Chambers, and the Immigration Appeal Tribunal headed by Mr. Charles Richardson.

Finally, I would also like to thank Mrs. Tionea Effs, Mr. B. Terrence Smith, Ms. Shawnea Lewis, Ms. Nekia Richardson, Ms. Ashleigh Lambert, and their respective teams, as well as the Collector of Customs, Mrs. Lucinda Pearman, and her airport team for administering the airport border control on behalf of Immigration.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. This concludes Head 27. I will now move to Head 55—the Department of Financial Assistance.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

HEAD 55—DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, I will now present the estimates of expenditure and revenue for Head 55, the Department of Financial Assistance, which can be found on pages B-182 through B-185, as well as pages C-13 and C-19 of the Budget Book.

Mission

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, the role of the Department of Financial Assistance (DFA) is to ensure that individuals with insufficient financial resources have access to services in order to gain, maintain or regain a minimum standard of living while encouraging personal and economic independence. The services enable the individual to maintain dignity and self-worth and encourage the development of personal skills and resources. The department derives its mandate from the following legislation: Financial Assistance Act 2001, Financial Assistance Regulations 2004, Child Day Care Allowance Act 2008 and the Child Day Care Allowance Regulations 2008.

The mission of the Department of Financial Assistance is, *To assist vulnerable Bermudians to maintain a minimum standard of living during challenging economic times*, as indicated on page B-182. The department embodies this mission, and the ethos is very clear when delivering its mandate. The Government is committed to reducing poverty and inequality in Bermuda and will strengthen the support to families in an effort to assist them in being self-sustaining. Building a

stronger community will result in a safer and more confident nation.

Categories of Financial Assistance Awards

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, Financial Assistance is intended to assist with partial or full financial awards, in accordance with legislation, for such items as follows:

- food
- rent/rest/nursing home fees
- utilities
- health insurance
- adult day care
- home care
- medication/medical equipment
- child day care allowance

Approval for financial assistance is based on proven need and a *means test*. This means test will assess the basic needs for a household to sustain monthly obligations either in whole or in part. Eligible and qualified clients in receipt of financial assistance are classified into one of the following four main categories:

1. pensioners
2. disabled
3. earnings-low [employed]
4. abled-bodied and unemployed

As of January 2023, the total number of persons on financial assistance was 2,035. The largest category continues to be pensioners, with 1,019 persons, or 50 per cent of total persons in receipt of financial assistance. The next highest category was persons with a disability, at 747, or 37 per cent. Then persons employed with insufficient earnings at 141, or 7 per cent, followed by able-bodied unemployed persons totalling 128, or 6 per cent. There were approximately 109 children being supported in the Child Day Care Allowance Programme for this reporting period.

Madam Chairman, the monthly average number of new financial assistance applications received by the department currently stands at 51. The vetting process for each new application is meticulous and extensive, as information is requested from third parties such as landlords, rest and nursing homes, financial institutions and other government departments to ensure applicants are accurately means tested.

The officers of the department adhere to a turnaround timeframe of approximately two to three weeks from the date of receipt of each new application to the completion of the vetting process. Whilst vetting new applications, the department continues to successfully service all existing eligible financial assistance clients without interruptions. For the past three fiscal years, the department provided this seamless continuum while also shouldering the added responsibility for the Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) programme.

Department Objectives

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, the department objectives can be found on page B-182, and I am pleased to report that, similar to what was reported in the prior year, [there] continues to be tangible improvement geared toward achieving each objective. It is the intent that a robust and consistent approach for monitoring risk and enabling compliance will provide value-added capability to the current system and aid in robust technical solutions when addressing areas of concern. As a result, the department has been able to integrate the management of risk into its strategic and operational management system and place emphasis on leadership, governance, processes, actions and controls within the context of change management, with positive results.

The Department of Financial Assistance must ensure that all actions and transactions as performed by all officers are in compliance with the department's legislation and any other legislation that impacts the nature of the service provided. There are also protocols being employed for *know your customer* (KYC).

The department continues its practice of adhering to internationally recognised standards of care when managing relationships with financial assistance clients, and this will be explored in more detail under the section Financial Assistance Social Workers.

The department continues to collaborate with the Department of Information and Digital Technology on the introduction of digital forms for persons making an application for financial assistance. The intent is to connect the public service with the people of Bermuda through comprehensive, secure and accessible digital forms. Modern, innovative digital technology facilitates internal efficiency and effectiveness and mobile working conditions. This is identified as the last performance objective on page B-182. It is hoped that data-gathering and reporting are expected to be less onerous in the very near future. This will improve the department's data analytics function and risk management.

Performance Measures

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, performance measures for the department can be found on page B-185 and demonstrates to stakeholders and citizens the achievement of public value to a vulnerable population group. These performance measures are deliberately concise and precise, as [they] focus on measuring outcomes, which better articulates the ability of the department in advancing effectiveness and service delivery. For example, in accordance with page B-185 are the following measures:

1. Reduce recoverable debt from the prior year. This allows the department to eliminate waste and control budgeted amounts by effectively dealing with financial assistance fraud and reduce abuse of the system and overpayment of funds. The original forecast for 2022/23 was to reduce recoverable debt by 15 per cent from the prior year, and the revised forecast

remains consistent. At the time of this brief the department achieved its 15 per cent target and is expected to exceed this percentage by March 2023. This achievement is as a result of the tremendous work performed by the department's investigative officers.

2. Reduce the number of able-bodied and/or earnings low clients from the prior year. Financial Assistance is committed to making work pay, and its award structure provides a foundation for this so as to ensure persons do not lose all benefits if they find some employment. Financial assistance reform is being progressed to advance this policy to help get more people back to work, discourage dependency, and [assist people to] become financially independent. All able-bodied persons who are in receipt of financial assistance are required to register with the Department of Workforce Development for job-seeking purposes. This allows clients to participate in workforce-related assessments and development programmes. The Department of Financial Assistance continues to collaborate with the Department of Workforce Development to achieve this performance measure.

The original forecast for 2022/23 was based on the hope that, with continual review and formulation of strategy, 10 per cent of clients who fall in the categories of able-bodied unemployed and earnings-low could be transitioned out of Financial Assistance and into sustainable work with independent living conditions. However, with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 [pandemic], the revised forecast has been adjusted to zero [per cent]. The target outcome for 2023/24 will return to 10 per cent as initiatives with Workforce Development and collaborations with other external agencies are developed.

3. Reduce the number of legitimate client complaints from the prior year. This is aimed at improving the service quality. The department completed service standards training in 2022 and addresses legitimate client complaints in a timely and efficient manner without compromising professionalism. For its revised forecast for 2022/23 and target outcome for 2023/24, the department will be benchmarked against a 50 per cent reduction of reported legitimate client complaints.

4. Reduce the number of Review Board appeals from the prior year. A Financial Assistance Review Board is appointed to hear appeals against the director's decision to

- refuse an application for an award;
- impose special conditions on an award;
- suspend in whole or in part an award;
- vary [an award];
- revoke an award; or
- require repayment of any sum of money in accordance with legislation.

On an appeal, the Board may confirm, vary or reverse the decision which is the subject of the appeal.

This performance measure is aimed at improving the overall administration of the Financial Assistance Act, regulations and policy. The reduction in the

number of legitimate client complaints, as previously discussed, led to a positive correlation which resulted in only four registered appeals in 2022/23. Outcomes from these appeals remain pending with the Review Board.

Expenditure Overview

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, total current expenditure is estimated to be \$54,121,000, as shown on page B-183. This amount constitutes 70 per cent of the total budget allocated for the Ministry and is an increase of \$1,161,000, or 2 per cent, from the prior year's original budget. This increase in the budget request is required to fund the Financial Assistance programme based on a forecasted upward trend of new applications due to Financial Assistance reform and adjustments to the value of Financial Assistance awards in 2023/24.

Note that during 2022/23 the Ministry received additional funding to provide food assistance relief for persons eligible to receive financial assistance and who are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the constant rising cost of food. This additional funding totalled \$931,691 and was appropriated to cost centre 65997, National Health Emergency. Overall, with this additional funding the revised total current expenditure for 2022/23 stands at \$53,892,000 as shown on page B-183. However, taking this into consideration, the increase in the budget request for 2023/24 from the prior year's 2022/23 revised budget amount remains at 2 per cent.

Capital Expenditure

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, total capital expenditure is estimated to be \$29,000 in fiscal year 2023/24 compared to \$95,000 from the prior year, as shown on page C-13. This capital budget of \$28,749 will be required to replace two photocopiers that have reached the end of their useful life.

Manpower

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, the department is required to conduct frequent reviews of resource utilisation so as to identify any structural deficiencies and capability gaps. This exercise has become even more critical given that the operational demands of the department have increased beyond the normal rate of attrition. This increase was initially due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the unemployed and under-employed. Also, the application process is intensive and thus warrants the resources to maintain the steady flow of intake and administrative business activities.

In addition, as you would have heard, the Throne Speech highlighted new initiatives that will result in amendments to the Child Day Care Allowance

Act 2008, Financial Assistance Act 2001 and Financial Assistance Regulations 2004. These amendments are aimed at expanding the pool of parents who can qualify for Child Day Care Allowance and provide social protection systems that will guarantee more families, including some in higher income brackets, to have access to resources that will allow them to meet their basic needs. In addition, Financial Assistance reform will assist households requiring immediate assistance with expenses to meet short-term needs.

Therefore, it is anticipated that this will result in an even higher number of application submissions. Hence, with all of these factors taken into consideration, the department's capacity to deliver its service will need to be managed.

Similar to the prior three fiscal years 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23, the department received an extension to additional funding for temporary service providers in 2023/24. Due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on unemployment and under-employment, there has been an increase in the number of applications and the number of clients, which led to an increase in the portfolio for each Financial Assistance officer. This funding has ensured capacity can manage the demand for the service [requested] and is crucial to mitigating burnout and providing assurance that the department will continue to perform its fiduciary duties.

This additional funding, which represents six potential service providers, has been classified under Consultant Services, Local, as it cannot be classified under Salaries until final Cabinet approval is received to formalise six new full-time positions. Note that this is a different approach taken when compared to 2022/23, whereby the six potential full-time equivalents (or FTEs) were included in Salaries. This results in a variance of six as shown on page B-184. The same page shows that the total full-time equivalent count for 2023/24 for the department remains at 34 substantive posts.

Output Measures

Sen. Leslie Robinson: The 2023/24 budget estimates are listed as two business units and are shown on page B-185. They are 65050, Grants and Administration, and 65080, General Administration.

Madam Chairman, cost centre 65050, Grants and Administration, is estimated at [\$50,008,000] and is also found on page C-19. These funds maintain the Financial Assistance programme and the Child Day Care Allowance programme. This amount represents an increase from the prior year's original budget appropriation of \$1,146,000, or 2 per cent. More specifically, this increase is broken down as follows:

1. an increase in the budget request for payments to pensioners, persons with disabilities, earnings-low employed and able-bodied unemployed persons from the prior year, by \$771,000, and;

2. an increase to the Child Day Care [Allowance] grant from the prior year, by \$375,000.

As previously discussed, this increase is required to ensure Financial Assistance payouts can be sustained in 2023/24.

Madam Chairman, the total estimate for cost centre 65080, General Administration, for 2023/24 is \$4,113,000 as shown on page B-183. This is an increase of \$15,000, or 0.4 per cent, from the prior year. This increase is mainly due to an expectation of higher operating costs as a result of increased caseloads coupled with increasing retail prices. The major contributor to this increase is as a result of a re-allocation in the budget from salaries to local consultants of \$517,695 for the six service providers, as previously discussed; also, a decrease in salaries by [\$5,925] due to vacant funded positions being filled and the new hires starting at the beginning of the PS scale.

Investigations

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, the department's investigative officers continue to conduct investigations and pursue individuals or organisations that commit fraud and abuse of the system. For instance, here are two case studies, based on actual events, that are being provided to inform the public on the nature of fraud and abuse that are being committed by persons receiving financial assistance:

Case Study 1—The subject, who was an eligible client of the department in the category of disabled, received Financial Assistance awards during the months of July 2020 through August 2021. One of the awards provided was food, which was supplied via a monthly updated food card to be utilised by the client only. The subject was locally incarcerated during the period November 2020 to August 2021; however, [the subject] did not notify the department of a change in the subject's circumstances. In addition, the subject handed over the food card to a family member for personal use during the period of incarceration. The family member was not a client of Financial Assistance. Investigations conducted by the investigative officers resulted in computer and photographic evidence of the activities of the fraud being committed—that is, an unauthorised person having access to a Financial Assistance food card. This case was referred to the Attorney General's Chambers for legal resolution.

Case Study 2—Unreported Employment and Other Income. The subject, who was an eligible client of the department in the category of disabled, was deemed unable to work. However, information was received from another government agency that the subject was gainfully employed as a driver. Field surveillance was conducted by the department's investigative officers, and evidence was obtained that indicated that the subject was indeed employed and did not report any earned income to the department. In addition, it was also discovered that the subject received a lump-

sum payment of \$17,000, which was also not reported to the department. This case was referred to the Attorney General's Chambers for legal restitution and remains pending.

Financial Assistance Social Workers

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, the Financial Assistance social workers' workflow trends are concentrated on case conferences/case discussions, [individual] counselling and overseas medical transfers. These trends support the known importance of facilitating case conferences and case discussions as an effective tool in ensuring that comprehensive service plans are developed and executed. Individual crisis counselling continues to be provided for an interim period of two to eight weeks following an acute or traumatic event to help stabilise the client's symptoms and to coordinate long-term care based on the assessed need.

The Financial Assistance social workers increasingly participated in multidisciplinary, complex case conferences with the Health Insurance Department, the Community Social Worker, Prison Services, Bermuda Housing Corporation (BHC) and other relevant stakeholders to establish comprehensive strategies to address increasingly complex cases.

During this fiscal year, there has been an observed increase in hoarding behaviour by clients served by Financial Assistance, resulting in the destruction of the landlord's property and subsequent evictions. Hoarding is known to be related to obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as anxiety and depression. The role of the Financial Assistance social workers is to intervene with the provision of short-term crisis counselling and to refer the individual to the appropriate long-term treatment. This increasing phenomenon supports the growing need for crisis and long-term counselling services.

Madam Chairman, the Financial Assistance [FA] social workers have been proactively participating in in-home visits to assess high-risk clients and ensure their overall well-being. The department is working collaboratively with Habitat for Humanity of Bermuda to assist with identifying elderly or disabled Financial Assistance clients living in derelict conditions. Department social workers will assist clients with completing the required application, and if selected, Habitat for Humanity will make home improvements that will ensure families do not live in unsafe, substandard or unhealthy environments.

The department is also working collaboratively with the Salvation Army to support persons with housing challenges. The team was able to brainstorm with the programme's executive director on potential options for Financial Assistance support. The next step is to determine what support can be provided to eligible facility residents.

The social workers' team conducted a presentation to the Bermuda College, Introduction to Social Work Class, in an effort to promote their profession to a future generation of social workers to serve the people of Bermuda. Department representatives also participated in a Community Violence Workshop hosted by the Ministry of National Security. The objective of the two-day workshop was to have the experts contribute to the formulation of the Island's strategic plan to holistically address community violence. Additionally, department representation participated in a two-day Safe-Lives Domestic Abuse Training/Workshop, which addressed the psychopathological aspects of an abuser and the psychological impacts on survivors.

Madam Chairman, the Financial Assistance social workers participated in a Mental Health First Aid training course. The course provided participants with the resources to help those experiencing mental health problems.

Within the department, the social workers, in conjunction with the executive assistant to the director, provided the means to support the purchase of school clothing (summer and winter) for over 40 clients with school-aged children. This included supporting the preparation of over 200 purchase orders and the collection of clothes and shoes from various retail stores. All of the clothing was distributed to the parents prior to the start of the 2022/23 school year.

Collaborative Partnerships

Sen. Leslie Robinson: I will just highlight a few. Madam Chairman, earlier in this brief I outlined collaborations that the department has been engaged in with other government departments and external agencies, specifically the Department of Workforce Development, the Department of Information and Digital Technology, Habitat for Humanity and the Salvation Army. However, I would also like to highlight just a couple of others:

- a) In Q3 2021, a joint ministerial initiative between the Department of Financial Assistance and the Department of Education was forged to facilitate the transfer of three-year-old children who were in receipt of financial assistance into the Bright Start Programme. This programme was intended to provide two years of high-quality learning experiences through a progressive 21st century teaching and learning experience.
- b) The department has been collaborating with the Department of Parks since 2015 in providing health insurance coverage for participants in the Skills Development Programme. The programme is intended to provide hands-on skills so as to promote the enhancement of knowledge, skills and experience to facilitate the possibility of securing employment. To date, over 110 persons have graduated with approximately 60 per cent securing partial or

full-time jobs. This initiative reduces the need for dependency on financial assistance.

Inter-departmental agency collaboration meetings were also held with Turning Point Substance Abuse Programme and Age Concern. Ongoing collaboration with the Attorney General's Chambers continued to support the development of the memorandum of understanding as a tool to hold clients accountable for maintaining eligibility in relation to compliance with special conditions imposed by the Director of Financial Assistance in accordance with section 9 of the Financial Assistance Act 2001.

There were also visits to rest and nursing homes which provided the social workers the opportunity to tour the facilities, meet the facility staff in person and address any barriers to client placements.

Major Policy Changes

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, in [2022] the Government expressed its commitment to providing access to the Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) to certain individuals whose employment was directly impacted by the COVID-19 [pandemic].

The [Supplemental Unemployment Benefit] programme ended in November 2022; however, from the inception of the SUB programme, 177 persons had satisfied the criteria for receipt of the supplemental unemployment benefit, which included health insurance coverage for those persons who requested it. The total cost was \$3,171,920. However, from the 177 eligible recipients, 149 recipients were cancelled due to persons receiving employment, non-compliance with legislation or persons receiving [other] forms of financial aid. At the end of this programme, a total of 28 persons remained eligible and received the [final] benefit in November 2022.

Madam Chairman, the Financial Assistance social workers referral process was restructured, resulting in a more streamlined process of assigned cases and a more equitable distribution of cases amongst the team members. Full implementation of conducting psychosocial assessments on identified able-bodied unemployed and earnings-low applicants pre-screened to warrant such commenced in May 2022.

In an effort to streamline department processes, the Senior Social Worker assumed responsibility for the monthly collection of rest/nursing home client census data/reports. This includes quantifying rest/nursing [home] beds for each facility, identifying hospitalised rest/nursing home [Financial] Assistance clients and identifying rest/nursing home client deaths. The attendance of the drug treatment court and driving under the influence court was restructured, with teams of two social workers rotating coverage quarterly. This change facilitated the ability of each social worker to manage their caseloads more effectively. By the social workers' attendance at the courts, they [are] able to

monitor the participation of Financial Assistance clients and to facilitate [interagency] collaboration, as appropriate, with Court Services, Probation Services, Teen Haven, Turning Point, Men's Treatment and Women's Treatment programmes.

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Sen. Leslie Robinson: I will just summarise these very quickly. Madam Chairman, there continues to be a focus on the even distribution of case files among officers so as to promote an equitable working environment. As of January 2023, the distribution of caseloads among Financial Assistance officers remains equitable and currently stands at 150 files per officer. There will be a review of the department's organisational structure to match alignment with these strategies as required, and the department has engaged Management Consulting Services to review and advise accordingly.

Madam Chairman, the Social Work section of the department will begin conducting psychosocial assessments of all clients categorised as either "able-bodied unemployed" or "earnings low," to comprehensively determine the clients' needs.

Madam Chairman, the Members of this Senate will be aware that in November 2022 there were some amendments made to the Financial Assistance Act 2001 and the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 as a means to begin the initial phases of financial assistance reform. You should note that the Ministry is continuing to advance the initiatives set out in our earlier proposals. More information will be tabled in this forum in the coming months when the following proposed changes are expected to be approved [for implementation]:

- a) provisions for families to retain up to 50 per cent of child support payments not to exceed a maximum total of \$5,000 in any given period whilst receiving any type of financial assistance awards;
- b) provisions to allow recipients to retain 50 per cent of excess earnings, not to exceed \$5,000 whilst receiving a [financial assistance] award; and
- c) provisions to allow the department to recover overpaid funds from [third parties].

The legislative process has already begun for [Phase Two and Phase Three]. Both [Phase Two and Phase Three] initiatives are targeted for completion by the end of fiscal 2023/[24].

Madam Chairman, the Department of Financial Assistance continues to work hard to support Bermudians that have been disadvantaged as a result of an ever-changing economy. For this, I continue to recognise and applaud the hard work and dedicated actions demonstrated by the team under the guidance and leadership of the Director, Ms. Pandora Glasford.

Madam Chairman, that ends my presentation on Head 55, the Department of Financial Assistance.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

Would any Senator like to speak on these heads?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Sorry! Oh, I'm sorry. We've got one more, don't we?

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, we've got—

The Chairman: Yes. I do apologise.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: —one more.

I will try to go through it as quickly as possible so that we can have some time for questions.

The Chairman: Yes, sorry. Thank you.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: No, that's fine.

HEAD 60—DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, I am now going to read the last head, Head 60—Department of Workforce Development, [found on] pages B-186 through B-[191], and C-19 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Workforce Development continues working towards its mission as highlighted on page B-186, *To develop a resilient workforce, to provide a sustainable and stable community.*

Madam Chairman, the objectives of the department are to

- implement the Youth Employment Strategy;
- continue to execute Phase 3 of the National Re-employment Strategy;
- strengthen partnerships that facilitate industry training, development programmes and initiatives;
- expand Apprenticeship Training Programmes to include high demand occupations in the workforce; and to
- provide support to the newly formed National Workforce Development Advisory Board and a National Certification and Apprenticeship Board;

Madam Chairman, the department's 2023/24 mission statement and objectives are "Future Forward Government for the People of Bermuda."

Madam Chairman, the department's primary aim is to support Bermudians to become work ready and to position them to successfully participate in Bermuda's workforce. This starts at their transition from the safe space of the classroom and school environment and continues through until retirement. The Depart-

ment of Workforce Development is a partner and advocate in ensuring Bermudians are prepared for the workforce [by providing]

- youth employment opportunities for students and graduates;
- scholarships for local and overseas study;
- apprenticeship and training programmes;
- internships in high demand occupations;
- national certification training;
- career guidance and Professional Development;
- assistance on redundancy and career changes;
- employment readiness training;
- registration support for the Bermuda Job [Board].

Current Account Estimates

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, as noted on page B-187, the Department of Workforce Development has been allocated a budget of \$4,114,000 for the fiscal year 2023/24. This budget is \$110,000 above the original budget allocation for 2022/23. This increase is due to streamlining and collapsing cost centres for departmental efficiency purposes.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Workforce Development comprises three programmes as noted on page B-187. These are:

- 6001—General Administration;
- 6003—Career Development;
- 6004—Training.

Madam Chairman, I would just like to highlight a few of these items. Programme 6001, General Administration, is responsible for the overall management and administration of the Department of Workforce Development. As seen on page B-187, business unit 70000, Administration, has been allocated a budget of \$817,000 for the financial year 2023/24. Salaries for this cost centre are estimated at \$478,511, with \$338,445 allocated for administrative costs. This section is staffed by five full-time employees. The administrative section of the department has had retirements and resignations in the past fiscal year. Recruitment for these and other positions in the department are a priority.

Madam Chairman, programme 6003, Career Development, is comprised of Career Development Administration 70300. The programme is responsible for developing Personal Employment Plans as a result of client assessment, core soft skills training and employment readiness training. Where indicated, clients may be referred for specific skills training and other support services to increase the individual's prospects for suitable employment [and job retention].

Madam Chairman, the 2023/24 budget allocation for the entire Career Development Programme is \$1,478,000, which is an increase of \$6,000 compared

with the 2022/23 original budget allocation. This increase is due to increased programme costs for youth initiatives and the collapsing of cost centres.

Madam Chairman, the Career Development section is staffed by eight full-time employees consisting of one career development manager, three career development officers (one unfilled), two training and development officers, one intake officer and an administrative [assistant] position, unfilled. And all can be seen on page B-189. Recruitment for the unfilled positions in the section are ongoing and will be filled by the second quarter of the fiscal year [2023/24].

Madam Chairman, programme 6004, Training, provides administrative support and oversight of the National Training Board activities such as the apprenticeship programmes, the distribution of scholarship funding for local and overseas students, professional designation training schemes and national certification of designated trades. This section comprises Training Administration, Certification, and Apprenticeship and Professional Development. The 2023/24 budget allocation for the entire Training Programme is \$1,819,000.

Madam Chairman, if we go to the Training section, 70014, this is staffed by eight full-time employees.

Madam Chairman, staff shortages for the post of two standard and enforcement officers will be filled by April 2023. Recognising the impact on programme deliverables due to COVID-19 and staff shortages and reallocation of resources, efforts to maintain optimum programme deliverables proved to be a challenge.

Madam Chairman, the Apprenticeship/Professional Development performance measures are outlined in business unit 70016 on page B-19[1]. The scholarship programmes included in this business unit are available to individuals 18 years old or older, and who are interested in expanding their skills, qualifications and knowledge focusing on vocational and technical education. Financial support is provided for local and overseas [educational] pursuits.

Madam Chairman, the Training section awards scholarships based on local workforce needs, particularly in areas underrepresented by Bermudians. During the period 2022/23 the department, in consultation with the National Training Board scholarship committee, provided funding for a total of 34 students for overseas studies. This year proved to be even more challenging, recognising the fact that while many of the candidates were well deserving, the challenge was that this year, compared to 2021/22, the request for overseas scholarship funding was oversubscribed by nearly 150 per cent, up from 10 new recipient's last year (2021/22), to 23 this year (2022/23).

Madam Chairman, in alignment with the Ministry's Bermuda Youth Employment Strategy, the awarding of scholarships to an increased number of Bermudians pursuing tertiary education further demonstrates this Government's commitment to the development of youth by providing funding for scholarships in high demand occupations in workforce in the amount of

\$350,000, [for] 23 Bermudians students to study at various overseas educational institutions.

Madam Chairman, to further assist overseas and local scholarship recipients, upon graduation the Department of Workforce Development invites recipients to take advantage of a paid Internship and Graduate Training and Development Programme in their field of study to obtain invaluable industry experience. As a result, a total of 53 Bermudians between the age of 18 and 26 were provided funding, career development, mentorship, coaching support and employment opportunities in their chosen field [of study].

Major Achievements 2023/24

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Beyond the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Department of Workforce Development implemented targeted programmes and initiatives to design and implement services, training, career development and employment programmes and initiatives to enhance the opportunities and improve the social, educational and economic lives of Bermudians.

Madam Chairman, the apprenticeship and trainee programme successfully expanded its apprenticeship, training, and internship programmes through engaging targeted industry partners and hosting numerous focus group consultation meetings. Notable progress has been made in the hospitality sector resulting in 26 Bermudians registered in a Management Trainee Programme in alignment with the Hotels Concession Act 2000.

Madam Chairman, benefits of these training schemes to employers and trainees include payroll tax waiver, wage subsidies, paid on-the-job training, work experience and industry qualifications. This payroll tax exemption from the Office of the Tax Commissioner provides relief for employers who are committed to training Bermudians. This fiscal year the training section expanded training opportunities to include 15 new formalised Apprenticeship and Training Schemes. Since 2022 to the present day, we have had six companies apply for tax relief for 23 persons.

Madam Chairman, the department teams continue to meet directly with businesses, employers, local recruiters and potential employees to explore new options in labour market trends to provide training and professional development opportunities that lead directly to employment. Attention and reference is derived from data and information in the Department of Statistics Bermuda Job Market Employment Briefs, Department of Immigration: Closed and Restricted Job Categories List, as well as feedback and resources from external industry-driven stakeholders and industry professionals.

Madam Chairman, the department continues to provide sponsored training programmes and initiatives to fill the gap where Bermudians are underrepresented to be trained and employed in high demand occupations in the workforce. This information is guided

by the industry recruiter business partners and professionals as well as the Bermuda Job Market: Employment Briefs.

Madam Chairman, the department continues to work in collaboration and consultation with industry stakeholders and professionals as well as local and overseas training providers to expand apprenticeship and internship training and employment opportunities for Bermudians in the technical vocation and trades. During the 2022/23 period, the department supported 60 apprentices and [sponsored] trainees in the areas of

- healthcare
- automotive service technician
- hairstylist
- accounting
- shipping and logistics

And that is just to name a few.

Madam Chairman, at this time I would like to recognise the efforts of the team at the Department of Workforce Development in supporting Mr. Chance Anthony who is currently on the *Oleander* as an apprentice. Mr. Anthony is a Workforce Development scholarship recipient and the department worked in partnership with the Bermuda Maritime Academy to prepare him for success.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry has received approval from Cabinet for amendments to the National Training Board Act 1997, to create a National Workforce Development Advisory Board and National Certification and Apprenticeship Board. The objective is to better align and engage a diverse range of employers, businesses, critical stakeholders, industry professionals, local and overseas training providers to advance the critical work and function of the department guided by the Bermuda National Workforce Development Plan.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITORS

The Chairman: Senator, may I interrupt just briefly just to acknowledge that the Acting Permanent Secretary of Labour, Pandora Glasford, has joined with a colleague . . . whom I am afraid I don't know the name—

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Ms. Malika Cartwright, Director of Workforce Development.

So, welcome. Thank you for coming today.
Sorry, Senator, continue.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
The Department of Workforce Development continues to work with the Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC) and the Industry Assessment Panel (IAP)

to promote national certification and recertification of tradespersons for welders, electricians, automotive mechanics and landscape gardening.

Madam Chairman, whilst I highlighted the challenges with the standards and enforcement section of the department, I would be remiss if I did not highlight their accomplishments in spite of the challenges with resources. The training team was able to convey national certification to 29 persons in the area of landscape gardening, which took creativity and coordination during a time when the Island was still under COVID-19 [restrictions].

Madam Chairman, under the National Occupation Certification Act 2004, welding is a practical assessment that requires a minimum standard set by the Canadian Standards Association, through the Canadian Welding Bureau. This is the standard requirement for national safety training for all construction-related jobs, guided by the National Training Board, Occupational Advisory Committee comprised of industry experts.

Senators will have seen reports of nine welder tradesmen who have recently successfully completed the welder's practical assessment test, administered by the Canadian Welding Bureau assessment team and have been awarded their Welder ID Card and National Certification [Certificate].

Certified Bermudians and participating businesses include:

- Stephen Dickinson—MASS Ltd;
- Aaron Hooper—Ornamental Iron Works;
- Kyle Tucker—Perfect Pass Welding;
- Kevin David Shiell—Executive Iron;
- Vincent Smith—Executive Iron;
- Romeo Laude—Perfect Pass Welding Services;
- Erwin Loria—MASS Ltd;
- Merryck Anthony Jones—Crisson Construction;
- Omar Kendall Rawles—BELCO.

Madam Chairman, we should be proud of all of these recipients.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITORS

The Chairman: Senator, just another brief interjection just to welcome Mr. Anil Chattergoon, Ministry Comptroller and Mr. David Banarsee, Acting Director of the Department of Financial Assistance. Welcome. Thank you.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
Madam Chairman, the Department of Workforce Development continues to be steadfast in their

commitment to formalise training and the awarding of National Certification to enable Bermudians to retool and update their skill sets.

Madam Chairman, recognising the need for an alternative training and development [modality] to meet the needs and demands of “at-risk” clients, the training section provided funding for training programmes for at-risk individuals. The Successful Academic and Vocational Education Programme (SAVE) is a collaborative partnership with the following stakeholders:

- Department of Financial Assistance;
- Court Services;
- Bermuda College;
- MIRRORS;
- Bermuda Housing Corporation (BHC); and
- Department of Corrections.

SAVE coordinates services and resources for at-risk individuals to increase access to academic and vocational training. Apprenticeships, on-the-job training, internships and professional development are avenues utilised to help participants to achieve self-sufficiency and sustainable employment.

Madam Chairman, the Summer Employment Programme (SEP) coordinated by the Career Development section assists Bermudian college and university students in the development of their career goals by connecting work experiences to their academic learning. Work assignments are professional in nature and based on entry-level job descriptions. Interns receive placements within government, private and non-profit sectors where they learn leadership and decision-making skills, time management, conflict resolution, and career and work competency standards.

The Department of Workforce Development continues to provide the highest number of summer employment opportunities for Bermudian college and university students. This year’s programme successfully placed 81 students. Each intern completed up to 10 weeks and received a maximum \$6,000 stipend for work performed.

Madam Chairman, the Career Development section also coordinated the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) for high school students. The programme runs for the month of July and provides participants with an introduction to the workforce and career exposure. As a result of the programme, Summer Internship Programme participants are better equipped to make more informed choices about their future career path as they have been exposed to varying career options in the workforce. This year there were a total of 52 participants from the public, private and home schools.

Madam Chairman, during this financial year, the department remains intentional with addressing youth unemployment. Youth, between the ages of 18 and 26 have historically seen the highest unemployment levels according to sequential Bermuda Job Market *Employment Briefs*. COVID-19 has compounded the challenges that this age group faces when trying to

enter Bermuda’s workforce. Therefore, the Career Development section continues to offer the Graduate Trainee Programme. A total of 15 recent college graduates were selected for the opportunity in this year’s programme which was offered in October 2022.

Madam Chairman, I am happy to report that five participants in this recent cohort of graduate trainees have received and accepted offers of full-time employment and two offers are pending at this time.

Plans for the Upcoming Year 2023/24

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, I will just highlight some of these very briefly . . . the department will continue to

- a) implement Phase 3 of the National Reemployment Strategy;
- b) implement the Youth Employment Strategy;
- c) implement the Personal Employment Plan;
- d) expand Apprenticeship, Training and Internship programmes;
- e) engage industry partners to advance industry-driven programmes and initiatives that leads directly to employment opportunities for Bermudians.

Madam Chairman, the department will continue to execute the implementation of Phase 3 of the Workforce Development Reemployment Strategy, aimed at reducing unemployment. This strategy, in alignment with the Government’s platform initiatives and Ministry priorities, is designed to implement a phased approach to provide training and career development opportunities to facilitate the ease of finding employment for Bermudians.

Madam Chairman, consultation and collaboration meetings with key industry partners aims to design and implement industry-driven training and career development programmes, apprenticeships, internships and the like that work in the interest of the unemployed. These programmes and services for clients aim to provide targeted training and development in identified areas of work needed that directly connect Bermudians with employment.

Madam Chairman, to further advance the development and implementation of the reemployment training and development plan. In particular there will be focus on occupations, especially restricted and closed job categories, held by guest workers based on workforce trends and labour market information.

Madam Chairman, the department will continue to increase the number of training and development programmes and apprenticeships to reduce both adult and youth unemployment and align with industry needs.

Madam Chairman, training will target areas such as:

- hospitality;
- vocational/technical trades;
- information technology;

- allied health care; and
- other high demand occupations.

Madam Chairman, the department's practice is using a more focused approach in providing options for local and overseas scholarships and funding support that creates a direct talent pipeline for Bermuda's workforce. We recognise there are individuals who do not have the economic means to pursue higher learning. The department will award scholarships on the combined basis of financial need and workforce priorities.

Madam Chairman, the department's proven success record has resulted in the increase in education, training and employment opportunities for Bermudians. They include over 100 Bermudians between the age of 18 to 26 obtaining certificates, diplomas and associate degrees in a host of occupations [such as] landscape gardening; HVAC; culinary arts; automotive technology; plumbing; nursing; medical administrative assistant; and human resource.

Madam Chairman, additionally, due to the demand and increased requests for higher educational pursuits at the honours, masters and medical degree level in high-demand professions such as public health, dentistry, microbiology, engineering, social sciences, physiology and law, the department has responded favourably by providing funding for 95 Bermudians who wish to level up and advance their education and training at the highest level in these specialised careers and professions.

Madam Chairman, the department remains committed to invest a total of \$350,000 to support Bermudians to pursue tertiary education locally and at overseas educational institutions.

The Chairman: Senator, just to let you know, there is 25 minutes remaining.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: I am going to conclude by just saying that the department remains committed to ensuring that Bermudians are not disadvantaged and that they are [sufficiently] prepared to meet the needs of the workforce. To that end, the department will embark on developing and implementing a more strategic succession planning approach within government, particularly in high demand occupations to provide experience and training in high demand sectors in the workforce.

Madam Chairman, this now concludes my budget presentation for Head 60 for the Ministry of Economy and Labour. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITOR

The Chairman: And I should acknowledge that Dr. Danette Ming, the Chief Immigration Officer, has entered the public Gallery. Welcome.

Would any Senator wish to speak on these heads in the time remaining?

Thank you. Senator Tucker.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And I thank the Junior Minister for her very detailed brief. All of these areas that she spoke on are vitally important to the sustainability of our people in this country. So, all of the information that she provided is valuable for obviously various reasons. Right?

So, I do want to jump in and ask a question. I will start my questions according to the heads that she spoke to. The initial question is for immigration, Head 27. Starting on page B-178, the substantive analysis of current account estimates, Salaries, can the Junior Minister provide a breakdown of the total amount of overtime payments that have been made at least in the last three years for . . . in relation to the staff having to work the border control, so immigration at the airport, really, since the implementation of the border control system?

The next question comes from page B-178, Professional Services. The original budgeted amount for 2022/23 was \$168[,000] revised to \$994,000. The 2023/24 budget estimate is \$1,053,000, representing an \$885,000, or 527 per cent increase of 2022/23 budget estimate. Can the Junior Minister provide an explanation for the \$885,000 increase over the last year's budget estimate?

In relation to that same area, I would like to also know how much was spent . . . how much was the initial spend on the system to get the immigration work permit process digitised and automated? And Madam Chairman, that is an assumption on my part that this is where that funding would come from. So, if it doesn't come from there, if the Junior Minister can provide which line item that applies to that would be wonderful.

Madam Chairman . . . I beg your pardon.

The Chairman: I am just going to let Senator Robinson know that I actually can't see her. So if she does have answers to questions, if she could raise her hand so that we can get them answered in the time remaining.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The next question I have comes from page B-179, Employee Numbers. We heard earlier this week in the National Security debate on Monday that the Customs Department rehired four retired customs officers to assist with performing immigration tasks at the airport in order that the customs officers can focus specifically on their customs matters. So can the Junior Minister tell us how many immigration staff work at the airport and is immigration operations at the airport fully

staffed? And if it is not fully staffed, I would like to know what the plan is to have it fully staffed and by when.

The next question is from page B-179, again, Employee Numbers. What is the total number of vacant and funded positions? So to be clear, meaning the funded posts that do not have people employed substantively in those positions. And what is the total number of vacant and unfunded positions in the Department of Immigration?

From page B-179, business unit 37020, Personal Services, employee numbers. If the Junior Minister can tell us what is the total number of staff who are dedicated to processing Bermuda passport applications. I do want to add . . . it is wonderful that she did tell us in her brief that we can expect a return to an 11-week turnaround. That would be great. It would just be good to know how many people we are relying on to make that happen.

This comes from page B-180, subjective analysis under Other Expenses. And I've only put this here because I am not sure if the automated system (that I mentioned a minute ago) falls under this line item, or if it comes under Professional Services; but nonetheless, I would like to know if she could give a status update on the go-live date for the new Microsoft Dynamics system. That announcement I believe, if I am not mistaken, first happened in 2021, so it would be great to have an update on when we can expect that digitisation and automated process to start manifesting.

Still on Immigration, page B-181, Performance Measures, business unit 37030, Compliance. The original 2022/23 forecast for investigating illegal workers took six to nine months. That was the report. There is no reforecast or targeted outcome for 2023/24 noted in the book. Can the Junior Minister tell us why there is no measure and also why an investigation into an illegal worker takes six to nine months compared to an investigation for an overstay which takes about one month? Which is still quite a bit of time in my view.

Page B-181, Performance Measures, business unit 37030, again, Compliance. Can the Junior Minister tell us what area or sub-department within the Department of Immigration is responsible for monitoring and responding to the immigration reporting hotline?

One more question on Immigration . . . actually, two more questions on Immigration. One is on page B-180, Performance Measures, business unit 37010, Corporate Services. So this would be the third from the top. Given the hefty investment I can only expect that would have been made or has been made in automating the work permit processing of applications, and then I believe that we just recently had an announcement from the Minister saying that work permits will be going to that 20-day threshold. Right? I am wondering why we would still be at 20 days when the standard processing time, at least going back to 2015, was already 20 days? So where is the efficiency or where are the improvements that we can expect?

The last question so far on Immigration is, I would like to know if the Immigration Board still assists the Minister with policy development and those types of things? Again, I remember seeing something in the media that the Immigration Board which once upon a time would assist with vetting applications and all of that, that this is now the responsibility of the Minister and the Immigration Board does not do that anymore. Could that be a bottleneck issue? I don't know; just putting it out there. But also I would like to know if the board actually still exists and if they are, are they actively working on this new work permit policy that we heard about earlier?

Madam Chairman, because there are three different heads, I don't know if you or the Junior Minister would prefer everybody ask their questions on Immigration and then we move on, or how are we going to do that?

Sen. Leslie Robinson: I probably prefer if you just ask all the questions since persons are here, so that would be good.

The Chairman: Okay. We have until 5:34, so conscious of time.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Well, I actually only have a couple of questions in the other two heads, so I think that is a good thing.

So on to Financial Assistance, Head 55, page B-184. Again, this is full-time employees. The Junior Minister mentioned that currently the caseloads are one officer to 150 files. Can the Junior Minister tell us if that is best practice? It just seems like an excessive amount, but I defer to those who know best whether that is manageable and if that is best practice. If it isn't, can she also tell us what that ratio would be?

Page B-185, Performance Measures, [business] unit 65050, Grants and Administration. The first item from the top, which is "Reduce recoverable debt from prior year." Madam Chairman, 8 per cent was actually recovered in 2021/22. Only 15 per cent was expected for 2022/23. The target outcome for 2023/24 is 15 per cent. So can the Junior Minister confirm the total amount of outstanding funds to be recovered under this line item and why the target outcome for recovery of funds seems to be low? So if she can provide information around that and certainly what is happening to recover those funds.

Page B-182, Objectives, Leverage collaboration with other government departments in achieving digitisation. That is also a part of an objective. So if the Junior Minister can tell us which departments that Financial Assistance has collaborated with to achieve digitisation and certainly in what ways that is happening, that would be great.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

I think Senator De Couto had a question, if I was reading his face correctly.

[Laughter]

Sen. Dr. Douglas De Couto: Yes, thank you.

Under the Communications Subjective Analysis, on the www.gov.bm website there is an immigration que-ries email. As of two days ago it was broken and has been broken for quite some time. What are plans to get this important way of communication with the department working? Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

And Senator Wight, I see you have a question.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I applaud the successes of the Workforce Development. I just have one question though, in the Pre-Budget Statement, there was a reference to the number of jobs at the start of the year and the end of the year and it was roughly the same. It may have been plus or minus a couple of hundred, but roughly the same number.

So, when on page B-191, I see that the number of individuals hired from the Job Board was 7,500. That would suggest that roughly the same number of . . . of people left jobs during the year. So it just doesn't seem possible that there could be that many jobs hired during the course of the year unless I'm misunderstanding what this number refers to.

And if you look at it another way, if you take away weekends and holidays there is 260 workdays a year, so that would mean that there is 30 people for every single day of the year but were hired through the Job Board so I applaud the successes but I just kind of question whether that number is realistic. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Any further questions? Senator Wight.

One more question from Senator Tucker.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Yes, thank you.

[This is] Workforce Development and the same performance measure area, career development. Can the Junior Minister just tell us what is the difference between the number of candidates registered on the electronic Job Board and the number of persons registered?

The Chairman: Thank you.

So, Senator Robinson . . . I'll just wait for one moment. And we have eight minutes remaining. And Senator Robinson, a number of questions were asked.

[Pause]

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[Pause]

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Madam Chairman, I am just trying to finalise a couple of answers.

Okay. I do have an answer regarding case-loads. They are manageable because of the makeup of each of the portfolios. Currently pensioners make up of the majority of the portfolios and these are assessed once per year.

For recoverable debt, the amount currently is \$302,000.

[Pause]

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Currently, caseloads are reduced at 135 to 140 per officer and this is more in line with best practices. So originally I believe it was 150 and now it has moved down to 135 to 140 per case officer.

Regarding reducing recoverable debt . . . all right. You asked about, *can you provide a breakdown in overtime payments over the last three years?* I will have to get back to you on that particular one.

You asked about providing an explanation of the \$800,000 increase and we will have to get back to you on that. As well as how much was spent the digitisation in total. We will have to get back to you on that one.

For employee . . . the Customs Department hired . . . how many actually work at the airport? It is 14. Are they fully staffed at the airport? Yes, for the Department of Immigration.

Total number of vacant and funded posts is 13. And unfunded posts, that you were asking about, is zero.

The total number of staff dedicated to processing passports is 10.

The go-live system for the [Microsoft] Dynamics, the date is still to be determined.

Regarding Job Board openings, they fluctuate from day to day although this number depends on employers posting of the jobs, the information. The Job Board is anyone who creates an actual profile. So that makes up the actual Job Board. Persons are to register with the Department of Workforce Development and have an officer.

There was a question about financial assistance. Financial Assistance is collaborating with IDT to complete the digitisation process. So Financial Assistance is collaborating with IDT to complete the digitisation process. Discussions are continuing and it is hoped to be completed in 2023/24. Each client that commits fraud results in overpayments. Each case must be investigated and if necessary must be reported to the Attorney General's Chamber after the investigative officer has completed their assessment.

There was a question about the explanation for professional services increasing by \$885,000. That is directly related to the supplemental issue to cover the

cost to onboarding consultants to assist with the backlog and high volume of applications.

So, Madam Chairman, there are a couple of them that I have to get back on and that is the breakdown and the overtime payments. We talked about the \$800,000 increase. How much was spent on digitisation, we will have to get back to you on.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator. So you are undertaking to get back on the outstanding questions?

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes.

The Chairman: Thank you. That is acknowledged.

It is now 5:34. Senator, would you like to move these heads?

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

No objection.

These heads are so moved.

Thank you, Senator.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: So, shall I just to officially . . . Madam Chairman, just move it just so officially it is recorded that I actually moved it or . . .

The Chairman: Absolutely, yes. Sorry, I thought you had.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Okay.

I move that Heads 27, 55, and 60 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Those heads are so moved. Thank you, Senator.

[Motion carried: The Ministry of Labour, Heads 27, 55, and 60 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2023/24.]

The Chairman: Now I will call on Senator Hodgson, the Junior Minister for Finance.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that the following heads be approved as printed.

- Non-ministry Department—Heads 1, 2, 5, 56, 63, 85, 92, 98, and 101;
- Cabinet Office—Heads 51, 61 and 80;
- Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Reform—Heads 87, 3, 4, 74, 75 and 88;
- Ministry of Education—Head 18;
- Ministry of Health—Heads 24 and 91;
- Ministry of Transport—Heads 48, 30, 34 and 35;

- Ministry of Public Works—Heads 36, 53, 68, 81 and 82;
- Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport—Head 52; and
- Ministry of Home Affairs—Heads 93, 29, 32, 49, 79, 89 and 97.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none.

[Motion carried: The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Financial Year 2022/23 were considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed.]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Perfect. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the Capital Account Estimates be approved and stand as part of the Bill.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: I move that clauses 1 through 6 of the Bill together with Schedules A to C, inclusive, be approved and stand a part of the Bill.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: I move that the title stand as part of the Bill.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the report of the Committee on the Bill entitled the Appropriation Act 2023 be adopted by the Senate.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing none; so approved.

[Motion carried: The Appropriation Act 2023 was considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed.]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: The Committee will now rise.

Many thanks, Senators, and Madam President will take the Chair.

[Pause]

Senate resumed at 5:38 pm

[Sen. the Hon. Joan E. Dillas-Wright, President, presiding]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

APPROPRIATION ACT 2023

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2023/24

The President: [No audio 03:38:15 to 03:38:49]

BILL

THIRD READING

APPROPRIATION ACT 2023

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

The President: [Microphone not on.]

[Pause]

The President: Sorry. I didn't realise it was off.
Is there any objection to the third reading?
No objection.

The President: Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that the Bill entitled the Appropriation Act 2023 do now pass.

The President: Is there any objection to the passage of the Bill?

No objection. The Bill is passed.

Thank you all, Senators. And thank you, Arianna Hodgson for the presentation of the Bill.

[Motion carried: The Appropriation Act 2023 was read a third time and passed.]

The President: We will now move on to the rest of our agenda.

MOTIONS

The President: There are none.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The President: Would any Senator care to speak?
Minister Darrell, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, Madam—

The President: Senator Dill, did you indicate . . . I couldn't see you. Did you indicate you wanted to speak?

Sen. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Yes, thank you.

The President: Yes, on congratulations or obituaries? Yes, please. You have the floor.

Sen. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Madam President.

I wanted to take the opportunity to express my sincere condolences to two families, yet, one family, two women who were outstanding individuals in this community, women who gave their lives to service have passed on. They are two sisters. One is Mrs. Muriel Anderson who was a long-standing member of Mt. Zion AME Church in Southampton who gave tirelessly of herself over the years. And regrettably, her sister passed a few days later and her name is Mrs. Gladys Furbert who was a member of Bethel AME Church. They will both be tremendously missed. They both were not only good church members, but they served throughout their community helping others, being an encouragement to others. I know so many young people who they have helped over the years to help [them] achieve their goals. So we express our sincere condolences to those families and we pray that they will rest in peace and that their legacy will continue. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Senator Dill.

Senator Leslie Robinson, I see your hand. You have the floor.

Sen. Leslie Robinson: Yes, thank you, Madam President.

I would also like to add to those remarks. Both Sister Anderson and Sister Furbert were stalwarts both in the AME Church and in the community. In particular, Sister Anderson was a long-time employee at the Bermuda Bakery. And Sister Furbert, was one of the pioneers, one of the Black women back in the 1970s and in the 1980s in particular who worked at the Bank of Bermuda. She paved the way for many, many Black women to be able to have managerial and supervisory jobs at the bank. She endured much to be able to rise through the ranks of being a manager. And in addition to that she not only worked in her community and in her church but she raised two very outstanding fine people

in our community. One is a great educator, Levyette Robinson, and the other one is Malcolm Furbert who is an outstanding corporate lawyer. So we definitely would like to pay homage to the families of both the Andersons and the Furberts.

The President: Thank you, Senator Robinson.

I believe . . . Senator Lindsey Simmons, I see your hand too. Do you want to speak on this?

Sen. Lindsay Simmons: Yes, please, Madam President, thank you.

Madam President, I don't think this has ever been done since I have been a Senator, but I just want to take a moment. I know this House and the other House would like to . . . I'm pretty sure everybody would like to agree with me and congratulate two people who got married today on 3/23/23 at 2:30 today—and I was able to slip out to witness their union—Mr. Derek Lamb and his new wife, Ashleigh Lamb. So congratulations to them. And we wish them a lifetime of happiness.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Lindsey Simmons. I am sure we . . . all Senators will agree and join you in congratulating them both. So, thank you for that.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

No? Hearing none—

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: I will. I will.

The President: Minister Darrell.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you.

You know I do this every year, so, please indulge me for my couple of moments.

Tomorrow, Madam President, is Friday, March 24. And we have been here before, and I know she is listening, so I am glad some of my fellow Senators gave me time to get on. But tomorrow a not-so-little girl name Tatum Suraeya Darrell turns 12 years old, Madam President. She is actually at the hospital because yesterday on March 22, she welcomed a baby cousin into this world. So I know she is *extra-joyed* and extra happy that she has a new baby cousin. And tomorrow she will be celebrating her 12th birthday. So Tatum Suraeya Darrell, *Happy birthday, my love, and congratulations and I hope you see many more.*

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

Not hearing anyone else . . . actually, Minister Darrell, we will join you in—

[Laughter]

The President: —congratulating your daughter.

Senators, we now have adjournment. So, Minister, it is back to you.

ADJOURNMENT

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I do now ask that the Senate adjourn until Monday, March 27.

The President: Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

Would anyone want to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, if I may. I won't be long.

The President: You certainly may, Minister Darrell.

CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE GAME

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, as I would have alluded to earlier, the Bermuda Football Association is hosting a Concacaf Nations League Game this Saturday. And the time is 3:00 pm at the National Sports Centre. I just want to take a bit of time in this motion to adjourn, Madam President, to encourage all Bermudians to support the Bermuda Football Association by going online to gpass.bm and purchasing tickets to the game.

As the Minister responsible for Sport, I have heard from many players the importance of a home crowd. Anybody who has participated or played on the national level in any sport knows that support whether you know that people at home are watching you online, whether there are people in the stands screaming your name and cheering you on, it could be the difference maker, Madam President, in the results and the performance of the team. I know that the Bermuda Football Association have been promoting this Nations League Game. And we have some exciting players coming back from the UK to play, led by (I believe he is the captain) Mr. Nahki Wells. It is sad to see that he has alluded that this may be one of his final games as far as playing for the national team. That was reported today by the daily.

But I want to encourage all football fans, all sporting fans of Bermuda to try to carve out some time on Saturday, 3:00 pm at the National Sports Centre at the Dame Flora Duffy Stadium to support the national team. I would also like to say that the Department of Culture has been instrumental in engaging the Gombeyas to come together in another show of unity and they will be putting on a robust half-time performance to help the crowd to support our Gombey Warriors (that is the football team). So, I want to thank the Department of Culture for sponsoring that.

And Madam President, I know all of the football players, the coaches, and their families would be encouraged to see a large crowd fill the National Sports

Centre (again on Saturday) to support our national team versus Guyana.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

With that, the Senate stands adjourned until Monday the 27th of March.

Have a good evening, Senators.

[At 5:49 pm, the Senate stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Monday, 27 March 2023.]